

176. Are you aware that many Natives in this district are going in for sheep-farming?—Yes.

177. Do you not think that is a state of things that has come about recently?—Yes. I think it is a very good state of things among themselves; it is settling and using the land, and adds to the revenue of the country.

179. Now, I do not say that they are as advanced as Europeans, but do you not think that there is a change in the Maoris for the better?—Yes; but, as it is, it is putting only a few sheep on large areas of land where there should be twenty or thirty times as many.

180. *Mr. Rees.*] Still, I suppose you would say that every tendency in that way should be helped; that should be the object of the law?—Yes.

181. Suppose 100 acres of Makauri were owned by Natives, would you compel them to form a Committee?—No; there would be no necessity for it. I suppose they would require such land for themselves.

182. Yes. But suppose it was compulsory in every block to form a Committee?—That would be if there were a large number of owners in those blocks.

183. But if there were only ten owners?—No. That would be an extreme case. If the owners are making the best of the land I do not think they should be compelled to appoint Committees.

184. You do not think individualisation in such a case as that would be at all advantageous?

*Mr. Mackay.* I think it should be optional.

*Mr. Rees.* I think that in settled lands like Kaiti, Matawhero, &c., there you have people enjoying individual ownership from the necessity of the case. You have individual ownership with individual enjoyment. I think Colonel Porter is looking rather at lands that are not used for occupation. In taking Kaiti, for instance, each man wants his own property. You must either have a controlling power or individualisation.

186. *Mr. Carroll.*] Colonel Porter, I have more in view the waste lands of the Natives.

*Mr. Rees.* Mr. Carroll is guarding against the more extreme cases. Your mind was running on great areas of land being profitless to the owners and profitless to the Europeans.

*Witness.* I also had in view very large areas of land under occupation only, partly stocked. Suppose 20,000 acres are occupied and leased to Europeans. Under the present system it may be leased at a nominal rental, and only a few thousand acres are being occupied. Of course, the title under the lease being generally defective, obstruction to European settlement exists. The land may not even be all fenced. There are few runs which are more than half occupied. The lessees do not improve them.

187. *Mr. Carroll.*] That is bearing on the European side.

*Mr. Rees.* Yes; but being Native land the Legislature could touch them.

*Witness.* If a European only wanted to use 5,000 acres out of 20,000, I dare say the European would be satisfied to take compensation, and surrender his lease over the balance of the block.

*Mr. Carroll.* That would be a question for the Legislature.

*Witness.* That could be met by voluntary arrangement.

*Mr. Carroll.* The European has his lease of 20,000 acres without conditions.

*Mr. Mackay.* That cannot be disturbed. The question is what that lease lays down to be done.

*Mr. Rees.* I am afraid that I am not one with the Commissioners. No man should take 20,000 or 30,000 acres of land, and not properly utilise it. The Natives do not derive proper benefit, nor does the country by way of taxes. It is only a step from the barbarism under which the lands were held by the Natives.

188. Would you apply that enforced system of making the land productive to lands held under Crown grant as well as to lands held under Native leases?—I do not mean that I would limit the area. If the lessee can properly farm 20,000 acres, well and good, but not as is often the case now, were the land is held fast for speculative purposes. I do not say that I would not allow a person to use as much land as he liked so long as he utilised it.

*Mr. Rees.* That is a different question from land nationalisation: that is land utilisation.

189. *Mr. Carroll.*] Do you think that the Natives should receive every encouragement to utilise the lands, and become good settlers?—Decidedly. Although the desire of the Government is to settle the Native lands, at the present time the laws retard it. The Natives should be assisted in every way.

190. As a people, however, the Maoris would not be benefited by simply having reserves set apart for them?—No. I know the case of the Tokomaru Reserve. It was set aside for the benefit of the Natives. It consists of over a thousand odd acres between Tawhiti and Tokomaru. It is in dispute. The land is neglected, and sweetbriar is covering the block up. Under better management they might have been in receipt of a large rental for it.

191. *Mr. Rees.*] Should they not be assisted in utilising such land, and encouraged to do so?—Yes. It should be occupied, and they should be assisted in every way.

192. Do you think, in the different districts, that the Natives should consent to large farms and schools being made for the purpose of educating their children in all farm operations, and that the charges for the maintenance be a charge against the land?—They might consent to do that; but they would themselves be so inactive. They do not back up those things. A lot of money might be expended. I do not, however, like to express an opinion. The Natives are so apathetic. It would become a matter of inducement. They would not see it in the same light as we would.

193. What do you think should be done to get them out of this state of apathy, or would you leave them as they are?—On questions of abstract conduct bearing upon the Natives I would express no opinion.

194. That is getting beyond the utilisation of the land and coming to a social question?—Where there is settlement there is employment given to the people all about. They can get work