

centage out of the work—given them commission, in fact, to obtain for him the job of surveying the land. In many cases the surveys would be done by other surveyors at a greatly-reduced cost; but, through persistence and the commission offered to some of the Natives, the surveyor charging the larger amount would get the work, thus doing an injustice to the great bulk of the owners. Another evil resulting from that course is, that the owners of the land would obstruct the survey because it was not being done with their consent or authority. That is the reason why I think the Surveyor-General should not issue authorities to surveyors to survey Native lands, but that the surveyor should see the people who own the land, and then have an agreement entered into and submitted to the Surveyor-General as I have suggested. In future, should Committees be constituted, it should be one of the duties of the Committee to superintend these matters relating to the surveys. That is all I have to say on that subject.

247. Now, in relation to dealings with the land, are you of opinion that there should be sales of land and leases, or only leases of the land, in future?—I think the two: the sales and the leasing of the land should go side by side, because there are some cases—the case of bush-land, for instance—where the land could not be utilised without expending a great deal of money upon it, in which the Natives might desire to sell, while land in the vicinity of their places that they might wish for themselves, or which they might look forward to using for themselves, they could lease. Land inaccessible to the Natives they should have power to sell, because they might require money for their own necessities, either to improve their holdings, or to pay amounts in connection with the surveys, or other liabilities that might occur.

248. Do you think the time has come when the individual signing of deeds by Natives should cease, and that the signatures should only be by Government officers and Committees, or bodies appointed for the purpose?—That is my idea. I believe the time has arrived when the signing of documents for leases, sales, and mortgages should be by Committees and Government officers. These Committees should first of all be referred to, and the Government officers should have the power of signing all documents in relation to land.

249. Do I understand you to mean that the dealings with the land should first of all be talked over in the runangas of the people, in order to settle what ought to be done, and that then the Committees and the Government officer would determine in what form their wishes should be carried out?—I mean that in the first place the owners of the land should discuss the whole subject in runanga—say, at the time of appointing the Committee—and that the Committee and the Government officer would carry out the instructions of the people.

250. *Mr. Mackay.*] With the view of avoiding a great deal of the troubles that have occurred in the past through dealings by Europeans for the leasing or purchase of Native lands, would you approve of the Government alone leasing or buying land from the Natives?—By the Government for itself?

251. Yes, and the Government then dealing with the lands as it thinks best?—I would not agree to the Government having the sole right to purchase or lease for itself. If the Natives wished to let the Government have the land, well and good, or, if they wished to let any one else have it, give them the same liberty in either case.

252. That is to say, that the Natives should have the option?—Yes; the Government officer acting along with the Natives to carry out what they desire.

253. *Mr. Rees.*] In relation to the Native Land Courts, are you personally satisfied with the working of these Courts?—I am an Assessor of the Native Land Court.

254. Then, being an Assessor of the Native Land Court, do you think it right that the Natives should be drawn about from place to place to attend the sittings of the Court?—I object strongly to the system of dragging Natives at a distance from their homes to attend the sittings of the Court. I have seen the great hardship that has resulted from that course. I have had many opportunities for seeing this while acting in the capacity of Assessor of the Court. Great hardship indeed arises from holding the sittings of the Court far away from the homes of the Natives and in the midst of European settlements. The proper course to adopt would be that the sittings of the Court should be held in the vicinity of the land about to be adjudicated upon.

255. Do you think that any good might be effected by the Native Committees or juries inquiring in the first instance into the tribal boundaries, so as to aid the Native Land Court in arriving at a settlement?—I believe that in some instances much good would result from that. Still, it is a system that would be open to objection, the objection being that, in some cases, the contending parties might use these Committees for their own advantage. By having a preliminary investigation before the Committees, parties claiming the land would expose the grounds on which they claimed, and that might be availed of by the other side and utilised. These people might “purloin” their rivals’ ancestors, and utilise them for basing their claims upon. I believe that it would be a very excellent thing, however, to have these Committees, and let them deal with cases where boundaries were in dispute between hapus or tribes. Let them thresh these matters out before going into Court. Then the boundary that would be fixed upon in that discussion would be an established boundary between the contending parties.

256. Are you aware that lately the proceedings in the Native Land Court have been very long-delayed and expensive and troublesome to the Natives in various districts?—Yes. I do not, however, feel disposed to blame the Court for the delay that has taken place in investigating the titles to blocks of land. The Maoris themselves are responsible in a great measure for the delays that have occurred. The error the Court makes is in listening to a great deal of irrelevant evidence, and this is what causes the great delay in the investigation of titles by the Court. The costs, too, of that Court are very burdensome indeed upon the Natives—£1 a day for all cases heard.

257. For each party?—Yes. If there are five cases or ten cases that is £5 to £10 a day. I think this amount of money is altogether too much to be paid. If each case only were charged for as it was being heard, it would not be so bad. It seems to me that that would be a more reasonable way of