

Committee of their own choosing acting in concert with the Government officer?—I think they would not be averse to a change in the direction you mention in those cases where the Natives are still holding amongst themselves blocks available for settlement. But I think that where the titles have been reduced to individuals, or to two or three people—that is to say, to families—they would like to act on their own behalf in the best way they could.

295. But wherever numbers of people were concerned, and in which the interests of children, for instance, had to be dealt with, you think they would like to act in a representative capacity?—I think so.

296. Then they would like their land thrown open not merely to the Government, but to the public at large?—Quite so, in order to obtain the best market-value. There are some blocks in which there are as many as five hundred Natives interested, and in which the individual interests would be so small that it would hardly pay to subdivide them.

297. *Mr. Rees.*] In such a case the entire value would be eaten up by the costs?—Yes, and it would therefore be better for such land to be dealt with in some representative way.

298. Excepting in the case you have mentioned, of a few individual titles, or of a few people of a family owning the land, do you think it would be better to stop individual dealings between Natives and Europeans—I mean dealings absolutely with Natives for individual undefined interests?—That is absolutely stopping all trading in land?

299. No, only stopping the trading with these individual shares I mention, and dealing instead with the whole of the people of the tribe or hapu interested in the land?—I do not understand you.

300. Supposing there are thirty or forty people in the hapu owning certain land, do you think it advisable to stop any individual from selling his share in the land where his share is undefined, and compel the whole of them to be agreed before any dealings take place, these dealings to be then carried into effect by a Committee of their own and a representative officer of the Government? In other words, before anything took place with this hapu-land, the unanimous consent of the people, or the consent of the large majority of them, would have to be obtained, and then their wishes would be carried into effect by a Committee of themselves and an officer of the Crown?—Well, in complicated cases, where the individual rights were small, I might be in favour of that, but I do not see why individual rights or claims in or to any block should be interfered with. For instance, they might like subdivision.

301. Then, would you say this: that in any case where they wanted subdivision, in your opinion they ought to have subdivision?—That is so.

302. Especially where the people so desiring subdivision are capable of managing for themselves?—Yes. Most of the Natives about Taupo—young men growing up—seem to like the idea of looking after themselves.

303. In cases where the Natives wish to manage for themselves, do you think it would be a good thing for the Government to advance moneys, under certain laws and restrictions, to enable them to improve their lands and so give them fair opportunity to become settlers in fact on their own land?—Yes, it might work very well with some Natives. With some Natives it might merely end in their losing their land.

304. Discrimination would have to be used?—Yes.

305. Would you say this: that unless the lands were subdivided, or portions cut out with the consent of the owners in large holdings, the dealings should not be individual, but collective?—Yes, I think it would be to their advantage.

306. And it would get a good title also, and at less expense?—Of course.

307. I believe that you have maps showing large portions of territory?—Yes.

308. Would you have any objection to produce these maps at some future time?—I shall be happy to do so.

309. *Mr. Mackay.*] Have you any knowledge or experience of the leasing of land by Natives to Europeans?—Yes; I have been engaged in getting leases in several cases, and my brother and myself have held leases for Native land in Taupo for some time.

310. For any great extent of holding?—In my brother John's case, 36,000 acres, I think.

311. What about the idea of Natives leasing to the Government large holdings, the Government then to sub-lease, and the Natives to receive a fixed rent from the Government, the Government to pay all expenses connected with subdividing, roading, and opening up the lands, paying rent to the Natives, of course, on what we call the prairie-value of the land?—It might work—I do not know. It has never been tried.

312. *Mr. Rees.*] Mr. Mackay wants the expression of your opinion whether it would be advantageous to the Maoris, should the Maoris like to lease to the Government, and the Government being allowed to do what they chose with the land?—I believe that the Maoris in some parts would fall in with that. The only question would be the question of rent.

313. *Mr. Mackay.*] They would get rent for land that is now useless?—I may say that in Taupo it was tried by the Government about 1874 or 1875. This system was different from that referred to above. They leased land on the Kaingaroa Plains. Altogether I think they must have leased about 250,000 acres. The Maoris overdrew their rents, and all of them were paid far more than the rental due to them. They were constantly wanting money, and the whole thing ended in the purchase of the land by the Crown. Certainly the Maoris did not place much value on the land. It was pumice-country, not worth much. That may have led to their parting with it so soon. The grantees in the course of three or four years sold out all their rights, and thus ended the matter.

314. Then you would be in favour of the selling or leasing being optional with the Native owners?—No, I do not mean that.

315. Do you say that what I have indicated would be a proper way of dealing with Native lands?—As I said before, if the land was individualised, I would be in favour of allowing the Natives to do what they liked with it.