

316. But where it is not individualised, and simply held in large blocks under grant or under memorial of ownership, the parties being tenants in common without any subdivision?—In cases like that it might be advisable that two or three people in a tribe should not be allowed to sell their individual shares, because the cutting-out of the portions so disposed of interferes with the portions which remain.

317. Maori land is, as it were, divided into two classes—reserves, and what may be called waste lands. It is with regard to the waste lands that my questions deal. We must guard the Natives from overselling their lands, seeing that they keep sufficient land for their own residences and cultivations, and for fishing-villages on the coast, and so on. These are the reserve lands. Take, for instance, a block, say, of 6,000 acres, for which there may be a hundred owners. We cut out of it, say, one-third—2,000 acres—for cultivations, pas, &c., and we make it inalienable. It remains for the general benefit and sustenance of the hapu. Now, if the other 4,000 acres were to be leased to the Crown for so much an acre, each of these hundred owners would get his proportion of the rent derivable from it, in addition to being assured of his interest in the reserved 2,000 acres. How would that work?—All that might work very well, the Government, of course, cutting the land up, roading it, and so forth. But it would be a pity, however, if the Government had to step in at last and buy all these people out under the real value of their land. It would be a farce.

318. But the Government would not buy out the land; they would lease it in perpetuity?—Still, the Government might wish at some time to get rid of it, and then these people would be placed at a disadvantage.

319. But if the land were leased in perpetuity, the Government could not get rid of it. Work out the problem, and see whether it would suit?—I will think over it. Probably it might apply to a good many cases. How would the rental value be fixed?

320. An expert, of course, must go over the land. Some of these 4,000 acres might be very very poor; other portions might be very good land. It would have to be classified. My experience is, that the Natives always reserve for their own use the best land?—Yes, that is true.

321. *Mr. Rees.*] In cases where there are a large number of owners in a block of land it is quite evident that under the present laws they cannot sell to the Europeans—the whole thing is shut up from sale or lease?—Oh, yes! where there are three or four hundred owners.

322. They cannot sell it either on this principle which Mr. Mackay has explained, but they would get a revenue from it?—Yes, that is so.

323. *Mr. Mackay.*] The wish of the Government is to save the Maori from denuding himself of his property. There are two objects to be kept in view, the settlement of the country and the protection of the Maori?—Quite so.

324. *Mr. Rees.*] The Maoris, of course, are aware that it is becoming a question among the Europeans to tax their lands?—Yes; they have often asked me, “When do you think the Government will levy this taxation upon the land of the Maoris?”

325. Do you think that, supposing a reasonable plan were proposed to the Natives for dealing with their lands at a minimum cost, and that they were certain of its fairness towards themselves, they would be inclined to support it?—I do not like to say that they would in all cases. A great many of the young fellows in the King-country, for instance, look forward to handling their land.

326. I merely meant with respect to all land beyond what they could profitably use for themselves. Do you think they would be inclined to support a fair method of dealing with such land?—I think they would. There would, however, be sure to be a certain amount of opposition.

327. *Mr. Mackay.*] Do you not think that when the Natives of a district were placed in the position I have described to you—when once they touched these rents—it would induce a great many others to avail themselves of the same facilities?—It might. In talking to the Natives the other day, while I was passing through the Waikato, I must say that the young men expressed a wish for what we call free trade in Native land. They want to have the right to do what they like with their own—to sell, lease, or do whatsoever they like with it.

328. Do you not think that that system would lead to their spending freely the money derived from the sale of the land, and that it would ultimately leave them without means?—Yes, I quite agree that it would. I know of my own knowledge that in the Waimarino and Taupo country a surplus, after costs of surveys, of something like £40,000 was paid to the Natives, and that within a year afterward they were penniless. Apart from this, there were moneys paid in the case of which I know nothing. The same feeling to realise upon their land I see amongst some of the old men. A few of them say openly that they wish the land to be passed through the Court before their deaths, so that they may reap a portion of the benefit. That does not appear to be the view of the younger people—that is, in some cases.

329. Where do you think it would be best to have a meeting in the interior?—Otorohanga would be the best place.

HAMIORA MANGAKAHIA sworn and examined.

330. *Mr. Rees.*] Have you had much acquaintance with the proceedings in the Native Land Courts of the colony?—Yes.

331. And with the method of dealings between Europeans and Natives regarding the acquisition by Europeans of Native lands?—Yes.

332. Are you aware of difficulties which have arisen, and which have brought about lawsuits between Natives and Europeans, in relation to such dealings?—I am aware that there are a good many difficulties arising between Europeans and Maoris in connection with dealings with Native lands. I wish, however, to make an explanation to the Commissioners before giving evidence. In the first place I wish, with the Commissioners' permission, to express my perfect satisfaction and admiration at this new principle that the Government are acting upon in the appointment of