

376. Supposing the land were sold to the public in that way, would there not be more left for division among the owners if these heavy expenses were avoided?—Most distinctly.

377. Do you consider, from your knowledge of the Natives, that Native Committees chosen in different districts by the Natives themselves would be likely to decide upon tribal and hapu boundaries in their own runangas?—I think they would do so in many instances. I know of cases in which it has been done in that way.

378. Is it not true that the Natives, in speaking in their own runangas, would adhere more strictly to the truth than in giving evidence in the Native Land Court?—Yes, I think so. I have known of cases in the Native Land Court in respect to which the Natives interested arranged amongst themselves the night before everything they should state on oath; and, in fact, worked themselves up in it just as a child learning its lesson. They went through this lesson over and over again; and I think you would find great difficulty in catching them tripping in such cases.

379. In the runangas they speak before people who know the facts as well as themselves, and so they know that deception would be useless?—Yes; and then, too, they abide by the decision they come to in the runanga.

380. I suppose that what you may call the public opinion of the Maori would compel them?—When it was settled that a thing should be so. The Natives as a rule have a great “down” upon a man who departs from his word in that way in the runanga; they look on him as a sort of slave.

381. I believe that at the present time all transactions in Native land are pretty well at a standstill?—Completely. Nine years ago they were at a standstill in the Tauranga district. The titles there cannot be completed, although the signatures were obtained. Whole parcels of land close to Tauranga that would otherwise have been settled are still in that state—such blocks as the Puripuri Nos. 1 and 2, Waimano Nos. 1 and 2, Otiora No. 1, and Irihanga No. 1, the best land in the Tauranga district, and all lying idle owing to the non-completion of the title through the changes in the law, and to errors and flaws in the procedure of the Native Land Court.

382. You say that the Natives are not disinclined to deal if the way is opened for fair dealing?—No, they are not. They have frequently said to me, when I have been engaged in getting them to sell land to the Government, and encouraging them to do so, that if they were allowed to deal with the Europeans directly they would readily enough dispose of their land, but they do not like to be compelled to take 3s. an acre for it from the Government when they have had it valued at £1 an acre.

383. *Mr. Mackay.* Are they more disposed to sell than to lease?—No, they are more inclined to lease, particularly this front land near the railway-line. The land extending away to the coast between Kawhia and Mokau they told me they would sell, because they do not value it, and because there is no one living on it.

384. *Mr. Rees.* How far is Kawhia from Otorohanga?—Close on forty miles.

385. Is there any good land at the back of Kawhia and away to the sea?—Oh, yes! and any amount of coal.

386. All that coast is impregnated with coal?—Yes.

387. *Mr. Mackay.* Mokau more so than Kawhia, I suppose?—Oh, no! Kawhia more. You will find the entire Kawhia district to be one mass of coal. I know of seven different seams.

388. Of what thickness?—One seam is 14ft. thick where it crops out.

389. Is it accessible by water?—Yes; two places in particular: one by the Waiharakiki and the other by the Taharoa Creek. There is another block just going to be surveyed above Kawhia, and adjoining the Aotea Harbour, where there is a tremendous lot of coal. It is the only block left unsurveyed there; it is just outside the King-country.

390. *Mr. Rees.* Is there any sort of harbour?—Yes; you can get 15ft. or 20ft. of water. There is any extent of coal there.

391. *Mr. Mackay.* Is it brown coal, transition coal, or true coal?—It is principally brown coal, with a tremendous amount of gas in it.

392. You know the Bay of Islands coal?—I do: it is something similar to that.

393. You know that the Bay of Islands coal is the best coal in the Auckland Province?—I know it is splendid burning coal.

394. *Mr. Rees.* Is there any land there fit for pastoral settlement?—A lot of the land is more fit for pastoral than for agricultural purposes.

395. There must be a lot between Pirongia and Ruapehu?—Yes, there are 500,000 or 600,000 acres there.

396. *Mr. Mackay.* Is it not of siliceous formation, covered with pumice?—Not there. In the Kuiti Valley, where the town is, there is a small flat surrounded by hills which is all pumice. It looks as if it had been brought down there in former years, for if you go down some distance you come upon the original soil; while there is limestone soil on each side of it.

397. Is there any cultivation at all in that pumice-land?—Not in that piece of pumice. It is only about 100 yards or 150 yards across.

398. *Mr. Rees.* Then the majority of the lands from the sea towards Otorohanga are fit for settlement?—Except Kinehaka West, in which 5,000 or 6,000 acres are alone fit for settlement, the rest of this block being fit for sheep. It is bush-land, and would have to be cleared. The soil is good, but broken. The difficulty is want of access by means of roads. The only way to it is by the Marokopa. It is a great flax-country. There are 30,000 acres of flax-land, and the flax grows to the top of the hills. It is the best flax, growing on dry land, and is called *kiore*. You may get it 12ft. and 14ft. high on the tops of the highest hills.

399. *Mr. Mackay.* It has a finer fibre than the coarse flax of the swamps?—Oh, yes! There might be a tremendous trade done in it if there was communication with Marokopa. Small steamers drawing about 12ft. of water at high tide can go in there. The difficulty is to get a favourable day, with the wind from the east. When the wind has been from the west I have seen