

488. With regard to lands that have passed the Court, but which are still in the hands of the Maoris—large blocks with many owners—do you not think it would be wise for a Committee to be chosen amongst the owners, who should choose their own reserves, and for the rest of the land to be leased by this Committee chosen by the owners, which would act in conjunction with some Government Commissioner for the benefit of the owners?—That is a very good plan; but where I think the difficulty would be is this: When the title of the land was being investigated, the Court should have ascertained the individual interest of each person. If that were done, then the course would be perfectly clear, but, because in many instances that has not been done—the determination of the respective interests—there is trouble afterwards.

489. You think that if the respective proportions of the owners were settled so that it could be known how much each individual claimed it would be a good plan for the Government Commissioner to see they distributed the funds properly?—Yes, I think that would be an excellent plan: so soon as the respective interests of the parties were ascertained, that the Committee, acting along with the Government officer, should see that the proceeds of the land were fairly distributed amongst the owners. That is what has created so much trouble and creates trouble at the present time—that is to say, that the individual interests have not been ascertained by the Courts at the original hearings, because, of the Natives interested, some claim large interests and some claim small interests in the same blocks.

490. Would it not be possible for the Natives to arrange amongst themselves in runanga what the respective interests are in the block?—They could not ascertain that if they were sitting in a non-formal manner, but, if there were some tribunal they were to go before, then they would be prepared and could then do it.

491. Would the Maori Committees of the district help them at all?—I think that the Court I mentioned, composed of two Assessors and a clerk and an interpreter, would be suitable for ascertaining the individual interests, and with such a Court the Natives would arrange and discuss these matters prior to going before it, and to that extent would facilitate the business of the Court. And then the few who would be obstinate or difficult to deal with could come before the Court, and the Court would settle their interests. But a great deal might be done by the Natives themselves outside in runanga.

492. Do you think that the Maori reserves which would be cut out for the Maoris should be made absolutely inalienable both by sale or lease, so as to preserve them absolutely for the Maori families?—Yes.

493. Then, supposing there were certain men among the Maoris like yourself, or Wi Pere, who have sufficient skill to manage for themselves, and they wished to have sheep-farms, do you think it would be wise for the Government, under certain restrictions, to advance money to enable them to cultivate for themselves outside of the Maori reserves?—I believe that if some such idea as that were carried out it would be very good indeed, because now there are large areas of Native land that are practically useless to the Natives. The money should not be given to the Natives, but it should be disbursed in such a way as to be spent in the actual improvement of the land, a proper account being kept to show the outlay that has been made. I would also have it that these accounts could be seen by the Natives, so that they would know what amount of money was being spent in improving their land; and this would cause them to be industrious and energetic in working and making the land productive, in order to repay their indebtedness to the Government. When they were able to repay the Government in a short period of time, of course the Government would give them a written document saying that their indebtedness was removed; but if the debt remained on the land of the Maoris for a long time, interest, at a moderate rate, should be fixed by the Government.

494. Do you think it would be a good plan for the Government to retain a small percentage of the proceeds of the land after paying for the surveys—say, 10, 15 or even 20 per cent.—in order to provide schools, or any things that the Native Committees in the district might deem advisable for the general purposes of the Natives?—And this money would be kept out of what?

495. Out of the rents arising from the land every year, and retained in order to provide for any thing that the Natives might want. Of course, that is only a suggestion for you to consider?—There are many things that the Natives have done in the way of giving lands for schools and for missionaries, and the Natives see that, through these lands being set apart for such purposes, a lot of dissatisfaction has arisen. For my own part, if I were leasing good land, say for twenty-one years, I would be quite satisfied to allow the Government a certain commission for carrying out the transaction on my behalf, because a great deal of trouble and difficulty exists throughout the Island on account of leasing and other transactions carried on between the Natives and private parties.

496. *Mr. Mackay.*] Would you be in favour of leasing land to the Government in place of selling it?—I would be satisfied that the Government should be the agent in obtaining the leases. I do not think that any trouble would arise if the Government would act in that position. Where the trouble arises between the Europeans and the Natives in the matter of leasing is that the Natives can get advances on account of the land from the Europeans, saying that they will repay them when the rent is due. In that way the Natives get involved in debt, and there is only a small amount of rent to meet their liabilities. That is the reason why I think, if the Government disbursed the money among the Natives, there would be none of this trouble. And the Government could retain a certain percentage of the rent to recoup itself for the cost of administering this land.

497. What would your opinion be of a plan by which the Government was to lease whatever land would be disposable for leasing from the Native owners, paying them a rent to be fixed between the Native owners or their trustees and the Government agent, and then the Government dealing with that land as it thought best, the Government also undertaking all the expense of subdivisional surveys afterwards, and also of roading throughout the land wherever settlement could be effected?—That is a very good question, and in some instances, where the land would be valuable, the