552. In proposing to deal with the representative people, and getting their assent on behalf of all the owners, you are going back to the ancient custom—that is, dealing by all the people carried into effect by their representatives?—Yes.

553. Of course, in the old epoch it was the chiefs who were appointed?—Yes. I cannot see how, otherwise, we could have dealt with them.

554. Then, in your proposal you give, in addition to the ancient custom, a legal safeguard. You go back to their simplicity, but you add something of our own legal safeguards?—Yes. I would point out another advantage. It would do away with translations of deeds. It would do away with interpreters, who would resolve themselves into Native land agents, or, if the Commissioners understood Maori, everything could be done before the Commissioner, and his book would show the money that had been received for the purchase or lease, which would be treated as trust money.

555. Then, too, you do away with deeds, Trust Commissioners, clerks, perjury, forgery, and impersonation?—Yes.

556. In fact, you give the Natives safeguards which they do not possess at present?—Yes.

557. *Mr. Mackay.*] And it would simplify the proceedings of the Native Land Court?—You would not want the Court at all. The Commissioner would settle the title. This puts me in mind of a good simile. I have had a great deal to do with goldfields in my time, and the disputes about claims, and these were always more satisfactorily settled when the Wardens went on to the ground and determined the disputed points there and then than since so much litigation has taken place over these matters. I believe that a person going on the ground and seeing the land for himself would be able to arrange such matters, and that the Natives would look on the Commissioner as an arbitrator between them. If there was any very troublesome case it could go before two Commissioners. Years ago I spoke on this subject to Sir George Grey. When I had told him my scheme he said, "Mr. Mackay, it is not worth while upsetting the Native Land Court—the existing state of affairs." I said that it would be better to do so, and that my plan was plain and simple, and that I thought I could arrange the titles to all the lands north of Auckland in twelve months. Sir George Grey observed that it was a good scheme, but he was afraid that it was not worth while disturbing existing institutions. I may also state that on many occasions I conversed with influential chiefs on the subject and described this scheme to them, and I never found them make any objection to it. They said it was a good plan and agreed with their desires.

558. *Mr. Rees.*] Having for many years thought out this subject, and having been conversant with proceedings as they have been going on under the laws existing, are you still of opinion that the system you propose is better than the existing system?—I have thought it over very constantly since I wrote my book, and I do not see, at the present moment, that I can suggest any amendment of what I there propose.

559. Do you still consider that what you propose is the proper system, as contradistinguished from the system that now exists?—Certainly.

560. You have seen no ground to alter that opinion?—No.

561. On the contrary, do you say that there are grounds which strengthen that opinion?—I do; because the difficulties in acquiring Native land seem to be increasing every year, and that it is quite time some alterations were made, as the present system is unsatisfactory to both the Natives and the Europeans.

562. Nor to the public?—Nor to the public.

563. Do you think that any amendment of the present laws would be of any use?—No.

564. You think an entire change is necessary?—An entire sweeping-away of the present laws. I will point out how these things are done. In one Act alone—"The Native Land Court Act 1886 Amendment Act, 1888"—on pages 5, 6, and 7, there are numerous amendments and repeals of different clauses and portions of clauses—in fact, most of them merely portions of clauses—of former Acts. This illustrates my statement that it is impossible to carry in the human head the perplexities of the Native-land legislation which is now in existence and force. I may also point out that, in decisions of the Supreme Court, some of the Judges have read the Acts in one way as to the disposal of Native land and that some of them have interpreted them in quite another way. This especially refers to that portion of the Acts which deals with the acquisition of individual interests in or part interests in blocks. There is a great conflict of opinion between the Judges as to what should be done when the whole of the block is not disposed of, although the Act makes ample provision for subdivision, and in some places says that certain portions shall be cut off for the purchasers and some for the non-sellers. There is a conflict of opinion how that is to be interpreted.

565. Could there be, under the system which you propose, or some other system on the same principle, any of the complications arising which have arisen in the last twenty-five years between Europeans and Natives?—I do not see how there could if it were carried out fairly, and by persons of ordinary intelligence.

566. Would the present expense, and the annoyance and trouble and incentive to misbehave held out by the practice of the Native Land Court, exist under your system?—The expense to the Natives would be very much curtailed, because they now have to assemble in towns at great distances from their places of abode, and to stay there at a greater cost of living than they would be at if they remained near to their own settlements. This, too, would curtail the drinking that accompanies their assembling in the towns, and the consequent demoralisation which takes place at all Land Courts. Infirm and imbecile people also are not able to attend the Courts. That is all set out in my pamphlet.

567. It has been said by several witnesses that if the boundaries were decided by Committees of the Natives themselves by common consent in runanga of the Natives the Natives would be more likely to speak the truth at such meetings than at the Native Land Court?—That is my idea also, because the whole of the tribes interested would be present. If due notice were given of the Commissioners going to settle certain boundaries the Natives would assemble there, and would not