

confidence in the Committee, and they sought to use the Courts as their ultimate appeal to which the title should be referred.

1100. That would be the question of title?—I am afraid, if this system of Committees were adopted you would get a large number of officials appointed in connection with them—clerks, interpreters, associates, and so on. It would be a nice sort of patronage for the Government to exercise, and if they had a friend to accommodate he would be appointed to a Committee.

1101. But, supposing the Government had no power to do anything of the sort, would it not be in the interest of the public if the land could be thrown open in that way?—There is no doubt the land should be open for disposal. From Otorohanga down to Napier there is a large quantity of very valuable land.

1102. And a good deal of it is suitable for settlement if the title were complete and easily obtained?—Yes.

1103. And that need not be so expensive if the present system of obtaining the individual Native signatures were modified?—Oh, no! that is a very costly proceeding. Up in the North, of course, you very seldom have a large number of Natives in the one block; but further south, and about Gisborne especially, very small areas are quite worthless, because there are so many Natives interested that it does not pay to acquire the land. I know of one block of only 300 acres for which there are no less than 800 owners. The rule at present is to pay about half a guinea for each signature: that includes travelling-expenses. The person employed is entitled by Act to a guinea for every time he reads over the deeds.

1104. In the King-country, of course, there are very large blocks?—Yes. If when the titles came before the Court an attempt were made to divide the block into hapu or family divisions, and a plan was prepared so as to afford an approximate idea of the country included, the proceeding would not be so encumbered with cost, and a person desiring to purchase would not have to acquire the interests of a thousand Natives. In the Whangarei district, where the Native land is divided into small blocks—say from some four to seven or eight Natives in each—it can be acquired easily. You can handle such blocks as these. I have found, too, that the Natives are accustomed to treat land held under the one Crown grant as if it were incapable of subdivision. If a Native has 50,000 acres in one certificate, he would sell his interest in the whole if he wanted to sell at all; but if the land were cut up into smaller blocks, then the Natives would sell a block (and not the whole) only, as they were compelled or wanted money, and there would be no “land-sharking.”

1105. Although they are not so plentiful in the North, yet in cases where there are real disputes as to questions of principle, questions of fraud, non-payment of money, forgery, and so on, do you, as a professional man, think that a powerful Commission or Court should sit to dispose finally of such cases?—Yes; finality is absolutely necessary. I know not only of these people in Australia who would come here to take up land, but of others in England as well, if they were assured that when the Crown issues a title—

1106. After such a judgment?—After such a judgment that it could not then be upset.

1107. I suppose you would say as a professional man that all the recent Acts since that of 1873 have left the law at the present time in a state of terrible confusion?—In a state of chaos. You can read some sections just as you like. Looking at these sections every time under a new light, a man may construe them differently; the reason being that the Acts have not been carefully prepared. Our Acts up to 1865 were much more perfect in their verbiage than these Acts from 1873 onward, which are actually a disgrace to our statute-book.

1108. I presume from what you have already said that you are not of opinion that a lot of Natives should be dragged from their homes to attend a Court sitting at a distant place?—Certainly not. I believe in an itinerary Court and the Natives would be only too glad, if they were saved this expense, to erect a comfortable house for the Court in their own district; and you would find that under such circumstances the work of the Court would be got through much more quickly. There would be no sittings for months together, as is the case now.

1109. Do you consider it possible to individualise the land, especially in rough country, so as to give each person a fair share?—It would be very difficult. You could not give a share to each man; but you will find that they are so divided into families that the land could be divided into fair proportions as between the hapus and families.

1110. That would be the Native method, would it not?—Yes.

1111. The individualisation of the land is not according to the Native method?—No: although in the old days the chief used to have the control over the land, he always recognised his immediate relations. They always had their settlements or cultivations that were totally independent of the *ariki*, or head chief.

1112. We have had a great deal of evidence, especially from Natives, as regards the advisability, now that they have land, of setting apart reserves for educational purposes, such reserves to be chosen by the runangas or Committees in the different districts, and the land not merely to be occupied by the schools, but to be ample enough to afford opportunity for technical instruction in farming, trades of various sorts, and to render the institutions self-supporting?—Yes; I believe that not only would the Natives agree to that, but that they would give generous reserves for such a purpose. You would require to have them administered differently than by the method which has obtained in the Public Trust Office in Wellington. That is the fear the Natives have. There are so many complaints in connection with it, and that is one of the reasons why the Natives dread Government interference. They see that when a Native has a piece of land alongside that of a European the European will get £1 an acre for his land, while the Native will only get 2s. 6d. an acre from the Government. They do not understand that.

1113. If they had District Committees of their own, with Government Commissioners to assist them in having control of the moneys, do you think it would work well?—Of course you would have to be careful of the ultimate vesting of these estates, because the Natives are dying out. Any per-