

1342. Is there anything else you would like to mention, Mr. Rennell?—One thing that I should like to mention, is with what Te Kahui will tell you presently. There is a kind of deadlock at present. The Public Trustee, for the last few years, owing to the uncertainty of the law, has been constantly expecting that the management of these Native lands would be taken out of his hands. He says, "As I expect a change in the mode of dealing with these lands to take place shortly (or next session) which may possibly take them out of my hands, I would rather not let any more lands." That has been the case for the last two years. The Public Trustee does not feel inclined to let, and the Natives cannot. Te Kahui has come to tell you of an instance where he was willing himself to let some land, or to allow the Public Trustee to let it; but the Trustee says, "I feel convinced that there will be a change in the law next session, and I should not feel justified therefore in letting any more land." So that there is really a deadlock in the matter of dealing with these lands. I know from my communications with the Public Trustee that he is anxious to get rid of the whole thing as soon as he can.

1343. *Mr. Carroll.*] Taipua has said that the Public Trustee should not be allowed to grant any more renewals of leases, and the Government consented to that; that may have been construed as affecting the whole question of leases?—The Suspension Act actually prevented the Public Trustee giving any more leases for fifteen months from the date named in the Act.

1344. Then it may be worded that way. That application had special reference to the granting of renewals, because the renewal of those leases which were falling in were the subject of dispute?—I have a report with reference to this matter which I sent to the Public Trustee.

1345. *Mr. Rees.*] What was the nature of it?—That in future tenants should be allowed to buy out on terms, which I thought would suit both Native owners and lessees. I do not know whether it is of any interest, but I will read it if you like.

1346. If you state the main provisions of it it will be enough?—My idea would be an arrangement something like that which you shadowed, of the Commissioner advised by a Committee, defining interests on leased lands on a plan, without survey, and locating them as simply as possible, and give certificate to that effect. Then a tenant could buy out his landlord's located interests one by one, or as it suited both parties. Of course the purchasing would not be compulsory; the scheme is fully set out in my suggestions to the Public Trustee.

1347. That would be a scheme for individualising the Native owner's interest; and after that it would be for the European to consider whether he should buy?—Yes.

1348. Of course your idea was to facilitate the permanent occupation of the land, which would be for the benefit of the whole community as well as for the benefit of the individual, and it would fix the tenure of the land?—Yes, it was to assist the tenants to get a freehold if they wished, and with the consent of the landlord, who is the Public Trustee.

1349. Then, at the present time, no matter what leases fall in or are applied for, the Public Trustee is not inclined to act?—None of the leases have fallen in; but he is not inclined to lease more land at present.

1350. Then, he does not see his way to grant any new leases?—No.

1351. Is there anything else you would like to say?—Nothing else.

1352. *Mr. Carroll.*] There are no facilities afforded the Natives to buy into any of these leaseholds. Can a Native buy into any of these leaseholds as the leases run out?—It is a question that has not arisen yet, because none of the leases have expired—none of the Public Trustee's leases. Some of the confirmed leases, I believe, have fallen in, but I would hardly like to give any opinion on the confirmed leases.

1353. Under the confirmed leases, if I understand it aright, the tenants get a renewal of the lease for an extended term of years at a reduced or raised rental?—Yes, practically they have got them, subject, of course, to the decision of the cases now before the Supreme Court.

1354. *Mr. Rees.*] There is a case pending now?—I think there are several. I know of one.

1355. *Mr. Carroll.*] Are there any of these confirmed leases which have fallen in that have not been renewed?—Yes; but only one. The tenant allowed his lease to fall in before he applied to surrender, and, of course, it was too late.

1356. He must surrender before the expiry of the lease; and he allowed the lease to expire without doing so?—Yes.

1357. *Mr. Carroll.*] In that instance he would not be entitled to a renewal?—The Public Trustee held that he was not.

1358. You say, with regard to those leases which were granted by the Public Trustee other than the confirmed leases, there is no likelihood of there being in for some time?—Yes; they were granted for thirty years, and, I think, the earliest was made about 1883.

1359. *Mr. Rees.*] How is it, then, that Mr. Mitchinson and these other people are afraid that they will not get renewals of their leases?—Because there are two different Acts. Mr Mitchinson is under the Native Reserves Act of 1882. It was improved land, but not, of course, to the extent that it is improved now.

1360. *Mr. Carroll.*] What rental is he paying?—Thirty pounds a year.

1361. Do you know if the owners of that piece of land which Mr. Mitchinson holds are willing to grant a new lease or to make allowance for the improvements?—Of course the tenant would like them to do so. I think, however, they would prefer to sell, seeing that the rent is so small. I recommended to the Government that, in this case, a Crown grant should be issued without restrictions. I think that would suit the Natives better, this being town land. The Natives will never use it again themselves. It would only be about an acre or two acres placed in the midst of European settlement.

1362. They do not desire to take possession?—I do not think so. From what I know of them I would say that most of them would be willing to sell if the land were Crown-granted free of restrictions. Of course I am not prepared to say whether that would suit the tenant. Perhaps it