

Act of 1865. Those who were put in the certificates by the Native Land Court under that Act, though they were never thought to be the owners, were nevertheless allowed to have full power of dealing in respect of the land. That was unfair to the other Natives. Where a limited number of Natives really own any block of land, I cannot see any inconvenience in allowing them to deal with it, or to individualise the titles and allow them to deal with it separately.

1791. Do you think it would be a good thing to encourage the Natives to make large reserves, while they have land available, for the purpose of educating their own children, and possibly drafting European children in with them? I do not mean the ordinary day-schools, but establishments in the nature of industrial farms?—I rather doubt whether the Natives would avail themselves of such institutions.

1792. That is not the point. Do you think it desirable to encourage such a thing?—Yes, if the Natives would do it.

1793. The Commissioners want to know, not whether the Natives would do it, but whether it is advisable, taking it for granted that the Natives consent. Do you think it advisable, both for the Natives and for the general public, that such a thing should be done?—So that Government schools should be established?

1794. No; Native schools like the one at Te Aute, but on a larger scale, where all sorts of industries should be taught—carpentering, blacksmithing, and so on?—I should be rather inclined to think that such a scheme would be a waste of public money.

1795. It would not be public money. The establishments would be supported by the revenues of reserves made by the Maoris themselves for the purpose. The point is whether it would be to the advantage of the Maoris?—That is the question. I do not think it would lead to a good result. I think that reserves should be made all over the Island, on the principle of the Karamu Reserve Act of last year, where the Natives can do nothing more than occupy the land, and not lease at all excepting the giving to Europeans the right of holding from year to year. There is no reason why the land should not be let for grazing purposes like that. I would limit the quantity of land that a Native could alienate in any way, and I would not increase the liability of the Natives' land for their debts. I should not like to see a way opened whereby debts could be run up with shopkeepers and afterwards charged on the land.

1796. You would not make the lands of the Maoris liable for individual debts excepting land owned in severalty?—Yes.

1797. Do you consider that the settlement of the country is delayed by the present condition of the Native-land laws, and that it has been delayed by the same cause for the last twenty years?—I do not know about the present condition, because the present Acts of 1838 and 1839 have not had a fair chance. But most certainly the settlement of the country was delayed by the condition of the Native-land laws from 1873 to 1888.

1798. Do you think that if the whole of the Native lands, after ample Native reserves were cut out, were thrown open for settlement, whether through a Court, or through a Board partly appointed by the Government and partly elected by the Natives themselves, which should give statutory titles having the effect of Crown grants, such a plan would be beneficial in its operations?—I suppose that plan would be contingent on the consent of the Natives?

1799. Not at all?—Would you give such a Board the power of dealing with the land in this way, whether the Natives consented or not?

1800. I would give them the power of taking reserves for the Natives out of each block?—So long as they started on a fresh field, and did not interfere with any land on which any European had a holding, it would be a very good thing indeed. It is just the plan I would advocate if it could be worked. Of course there would be practical difficulties in the working of it. Before the Act of 1865 there was a great quantity of land in this province acquired by cession and granted to Europeans. It may be that the Maoris got too little for it, but still it was a great comfort to the Europeans to have had Crown grants from the very beginning. There is another sort of case I would like you to consider—cases in which Europeans have taken up leases for twenty-one years, and have about seven years of their term to expire. I do not think it would be right to put these men simply in the same category as the rest of the world in negotiating for a renewal of the lease or for purchase. I think their position in treating for a fresh lease ought to be considered in any equitable adjustment. They ought to have some preference given them for a renewal at the end of the term. There are a good many cases of that kind.

1801. *Mr. Mackay.*] Of course there must be some general provision with reference to that?—You have talked already of protecting persons' legal rights. I am talking now of cases in which there are no legal rights. The lessee I am speaking of, who has made improvements legally and strictly on the strength of his twenty-one years' lease, even supposing he gets no more, expects in fairness to have a good chance of getting it renewed. Now, if you suddenly take away from him that opportunity, it is unfair. The existing holders ought, I think, to have a preference for renewing their leases.

1802. A species of tenant right?—Yes; to be applied to their cases as in Ireland tenant right is applied. Something of that kind.

1803. On that principle—that those who have spent their money and labour in improving the land should have some sort of preference in the renewal of their leases?—Yes. They have taken up the leases before the Native land they occupied was in a position to pay for the lease, and they are paying in many cases a good rent now.

1804. In some cases they are paying more than the land is worth, because they agreed to give high rents when the prices ruling for cattle and sheep were large?—One thing that militates against the settlement of the land is the enormous duty that is charged in taking up these leases of Native land. Of course it is very much easier to collect it by demanding the duty on the whole term of the lease at the beginning. If the lease is for twenty-one years you have to pay duty on the rental for