what they have to prove—that any ordinary Court of English constitution, which has to be guided to its decision by the evidence before it, must be placed in a position of the greatest difficulty in arriving at a true judgment. There is one other feature in the present practice of the Court to which I will refer, as the plan I propose will, I think, tend to remedy the evils connected with it. When a Court is about to sit a notice is issued giving a list of the claims which have been sent in, and which are set down for hearing at that particular Court. This list usually contains a large number of cases. The Natives interested in any of the cases assemble at the date fixed, and wait for their case to come on. Perhaps the first one called may last for weeks or months, and during that time the Natives having other cases wait on, afraid to leave lest their case should be brought on in their absence. It has often happened that numbers of Natives have attended Court for months without the cases in which they were interested coming on for hearing. As Land Courts are frequently held in towns, the Natives who are attending them often become involved in debt, so that when their title is obtained their land has to be sold to pay the debts and expenses they have incurred while attending the Court. Recently the Court in some places has attempted to remedy this by fixing days for taking certain cases; but this plan, seeing it cannot be known beforehand what length of time any case will take, can only rarely be adopted, and is open to many objections. One of the chief recommendations, in my opinion, of the plan I propose is that it can be made purely tentative, can be limited or extended as desired, and that if it is not found to work it will not have cost anything in its operation. If it does good it will unquestionably be of great advantage, and if it does not succeed it will do no harm, but simply leave matters as they are. The scheme is this: To announce to the Natives that they can, by runanga meeting, composed, if possible, of all the Natives interested in the land to be dealt with, held in any way they think fit, and at any time and place, and at their own cost, settle amongst themselves the title to any extent of country or block; that the Government will assist them in so doing by advertising their meetings in the *Kahiti*, and sending out notices by post, these advertisements and notices giving the locality and description of the land to be dealt with in such a way that it can be recognised by the Natives." I should say here that I adopted the term "runanga meetings" because I did not know any other term that would apply.

*Mr. Rees:* We have also adopted the same term, Mr. Lewis.

*Mr Lewis:* I adopted it because it would apply to meetings held in the Native settlements. "The Runanga to have liberty to settle either the tribal title or subdivide into blocks, giving the names of all the owners, and in what proportion—to individualise to any extent, in fact, making whatever division of the land they may be able to do. These divisions can be made before survey or after, as they may think fit. If survey is required the Native claimants must pay the cost, or the Government might pay the cost and hold a lien on the land. Landmarks, should, however, in any case be placed upon the ground, showing any divisions made by the Runanga. When the Runanga has arrived at what it considers a satisfactory conclusion as to the title to any block, the result of the investigation should be forwarded to the Native Land Court or to the Government, and advertised in the *Kahiti*, and otherwise publicly notified amongst the Natives for, say, three months. If within that period no objections are made the title as ascertained should be ratified by the Native Land Court, and a certificate issued as though the Court had itself given judgment in the case. If any points were obscure the Court to make such further investigation before making an order as it might find necessary, but the unprotested judgment of the Runanga to be adhered to as far as possible. If numerous or serious protests were received against the decision of the Runanga the decision to be quashed and declared void, the intention being that the Runanga should continue its work until it had arrived at a decision which obtained the concurrence of all concerned. I believe it would be found that a sound judgment, carefully arrived at, would not be appealed against. My idea is that the Runanga system of investigation should go on concurrently with the Land Court, so that Natives could adopt the one system or the other as they thought fit; the Court, however, having no jurisdiction over any land notified as under investigation by the Runanga, and, on the other hand, the Runanga should not have power to deal with any land advertised for hearing before the Court. It would be of great advantage that entirely friendly relations should exist between the Court and the Runanga, and the Court being made the ratifying authority of the Runanga's proceedings would, I think, tend to bring about this desirable end. To avoid any locking-up of the land under this system without the title being determined, it might be arranged that if the Runanga did not settle the title satisfactorily in a reasonable time, upon the application of any Natives the claim to any block could be heard and decided by the Land Court in the ordinary way. I need not at present go into further details of the scheme, but will proceed to state what I consider some of the advantages of it. There is no doubt that the Natives are becoming more and more antagonistic to the Land Court, and some influential chiefs have threatened to prevent lands being brought before it. As I have already said, this antagonism is unreasonable, and the grievances of which the Natives complain arise in most if not all cases from their own action, and not from any fault of the Court. It is a matter of the utmost importance to the Natives themselves and to settlement that the Native title should be determined, and any growing dissatisfaction of the Natives with the Court must be attended with serious injury to the progress of the colony. Some alteration of the present system is, I think, likely to be forced on the Government by the Natives unless the initiative is taken and a reform proposed. I believe the plan I propose would be regarded with favour by the Natives (1) because it accords with their ancient customs; (2) it gives every man and woman interested in the land a voice in the council which determines the title; (3) it will restore to the chiefs some of their old influence of which the Court has tended to deprive them—in other words, in a Runanga each Native chief or other member, and any statement made, will be much more likely to be appraised at a true value than in the Native Land Court; (4) the Runanga will not offer so strong an inducement to false evidence, and if false statements are made they will be more readily detected." I should like to make a remark in connection with that. I have heard of several cases in which a Native chief of high rank has been giving evidence before the Court, and because he is put under cross-examination by a man whom he considers to be very