

suggested by the questions that are asked me. I do not remember just now that I have anything special to say, although something additional may be suggested by your questions.

2056. In relation to the Government purchases in the Rohe Potae, are they not, for all practical purposes for getting land for settlement, pretty well at a standstill at the present time?—Not exactly so. Within the last month the Government have under offer large interests that are simply waiting the exact area to be ascertained in order to enable the purchases to be completed. The purchases are practically made.

2057. What is the extent of the land—approximately, I mean?—I think, when the surveys are completed under these proposals, about fifteen or twenty thousand acres will be at once acquired. Of course, it is a small area as compared with what the Natives there hold, but still it is a substantial breaking of the ice, and will probably lead to the immediate acquisition of other large blocks.

2058. As regards the working of the Native Land Court, have you found, while in the Native Office, that for the last ten or fifteen years the Natives have been making complaint of the working of that Court?—Yes. These complaints are made generally by petitions to Parliament, or by appealing to the Government. The complaints, I may say, generally come from disappointed suitors before the Court.

2059. *Mr. Carroll.*] Naturally?—And in that connection I may say that the Natives have not been sufficiently led to regard the decisions of the Court as final.

2060. *Mr. Rees.*] They do not so regard them?—No; the process usually being, when the decision is given, to apply for a rehearing, and, on the rehearing being refused, or the rehearing adjudication proving unsatisfactory to certain individuals, petitions are then addressed to Parliament for a parliamentary hearing to be granted, and, such hearing having been granted in certain cases, of course it has opened the door, at different times, for a large number of petitions.

2061. Has the Native Land Department had to interfere at all so as to expedite the settlement of claims—to push the Court on, I mean?—The Native Land Courts are recognised to be absolutely independent of the Government.

2062. *Mr. Carroll.*] They are recognised, or they are, which?—They are recognised by the Government, I should say, to be absolutely independent of Government interference, and, so far as I can remember, there has been no interference with the Native Land Court by the Native Department that in any way trenches upon the judicial functions of the Court, as laid down by statute. Applications, of course, have frequently been made to the Government to cause Courts to sit in particular localities. Where, for instance, the Court has been fixed at one place, strong representations have been made that that place was unsuitable, and that, in the interests of the Natives, it should sit somewhere else. In these cases the department has invariably replied that it was a matter that had been placed by the law in the hands of the Chief Judge for decision, and that the application had been forwarded to the Chief Judge. I am aware that the idea has existed that the Government has at different times interfered with the Native Land Court; but, so far as I am aware, that idea is really without foundation. Does this meet what you wanted to know?

2063. Yes. I wanted to know whether the Native Department had made representations to the Native Land Court with the view of expediting the work of the Native Land Court in the ascertainment of title?—No; the Government, so far as I am aware, and the Native Department, have felt themselves powerless in the matter. Any such representation might be regarded as an interference with a judicial tribunal.

2064. Does the Native Department keep any record independent of that kept in the Native Land Court of the areas and the amounts of land the titles to which are determined?—No. The Native Land Purchase Department, of course, keeps itself informed as far as it can, and, as it is, of course, in frequent communication with the Native Land Court in connection with blocks investigated or requiring investigation—that is, blocks which the Government wish to acquire—it does not record the work done by the Native Land Court.

2065. Have you any idea what the expenses are per acre in acquiring Native land—the mere expenses, I mean, not the cost of the land itself?—In point of fact, the expense of the Land Purchase Department?

2066. Yes?—The expenses per acre of the land acquired?

2067. Yes?—I can supply you with an exact return of the expenses: they will be found to be small in proportion to the land acquired. The Land Purchase Department at the present time is a very small one. I am in charge of the office, and I hold that position in combination with the Under-Secretaryship of the Native Department. There is a clerk and accountant, and there are two land-purchase officers. That comprises the whole of the present staff.

2068. Then, how are the surveys paid?—The surveys are in a great number of cases paid by the Crown, and become a lien on the land, and practically part of the purchase-money. In my opinion it is a very satisfactory way by which the Natives can get their lands surveyed, and by which also the Crown may acquire land, because a portion of the block can always be cut off to meet the cost of survey. This was largely done in the case of the Taupouiatia Block.

2069. That is the large block near Lake Taupo?—Yes.

2070. Is that return for which Mr. T. K. Macdonald asked in the House last session completed yet?—The preparation of that return chiefly appertains to the Survey and Crown Lands Department. The portion relating to the Land Purchase Department is ready to be supplied at any time. Inquiry has been made respecting that return, and I believe it will be ready early in the session.

2071. Has the Government ever made any attempt to assist or encourage Natives to take up land for themselves and settle upon it, in the manner of Europeans on Crown lands?—No, no systematic attempt. I have long been of opinion that such a course would be extremely advisable, and in many cases where individual Natives have applied for land I have written to them, by direction of the Native Minister, suggesting that they should place themselves in communication with the