Crown Lands Boards, and, in fact, put them in the way of getting land under the ordinary land-laws. While I have written these letters on frequent occasions, there has been no systematic endeavour made to induce the Natives to take up land under the Crown lands regulations. I am certainly of opinion that it would be a very wise thing to do.

2072. And even lands belonging to themselves?—I was going to say that in the Opotiki district I am aware of some few cases in which the Natives have taken up land. An old chief, named Hira te Popo, took up, if I remember aright, three or four sections at different times under the ordinary Crown-lands law. What was your further question, Mr. Carroll?

2073. That in respect of lands held by themselves, where they have not parted to the Crown, do you know has any attempt been made to get them to cut up those lands and settle upon them under a farming system?—Yes, there has. For instance, my theory for the purchase of Maori lands is that in all cases of land-purchases liberal reserves should be made, and in the reserves made the land should be granted to families or to individuals—that is to say, the title should as nearly as possible be assimilated to our own. I may instance the Waimarino block, and purchases in the Mangatainoko Block, where reserves of 50 acres each were made and granted to the Natives under instructions from the Hon. Mr. Ballance, when Native Minister—land very suitable for farming purposes. In the purchases also in the Rohe Potae, the original scheme of purchase was that 10 per cent. of the land should be made reserves for the Natives and granted to them. All that would go in the direction of giving them individual titles, and also land that could be used for farming purposes.

2074. But there has been no special Native-settlement scheme, as a policy, inaugurated on the part of any Government?—Not since the ordinary military settlements, in which there were one or two Native companies; but, speaking generally, neither the Native nor European military settlers proved successful settlers.

2075. It was only in places like Poverty Bay and the West Coast that any success attended that scheme?—Quite so; and one or two successful settlements in Waikato.

2076. *Mr. Mackay.*] Of course the percentage of land reserved would be according to the relative proportion of the number of individuals to the acreage, and quality of the land?—In the reserves?

2077. Yes?—No; in the cases I have mentioned the proportion would depend upon the area acquired by the Crown from the vendors—that is to say, if the individual interests acquired were 500 acres, the individual, under the 10-per-cent. system, would get 50 acres. I may say that the advantage, to my mind, of offering 10 per cent. was not only that it afforded provision for the Natives who had sold to the Crown, but that it offered them an inducement not to undervalue their interests after they had sold them.

2078. And was that 10 per cent. made absolutely inalienable?—Speaking generally, yes; except that under the law at present there is no such thing as absolute inalienability.

Mr. Mackay: Of course it is liable to be removed by application to the Native Land Court or the Government.

2079. *Mr. Carroll.*] In purchasing interests for the Crown in one of these blocks, is the transaction, on behalf of the Crown, and all the documents connected therewith, submitted to the scrutiny of the Trust Commissioner?—No: the law does not require it.

2080. *Mr. Rees.*] Not in relation to Government purchases?—No.

2081. I did not know that that was the case?—Yes, it is so. It would hardly arise out of the question, but my opinion is that the Native Lands Frauds Prevention Acts, which were certainly passed for the protection of the Maoris, have inflicted serious loss upon them—and for this reason: The Native Lands Frauds Prevention Acts require that after a person has paid his money his title is not complete until it is passed by the Land Frauds Commissioner. Consequently, in addition to the land duties and the other expenses that are really deducted by the purchaser from the price of the land paid to the Maori, the purchaser would necessarily allow himself a very liberal assurance fund to cover the risk of the result of the inquiry before the Frauds Commissioner; and I think it will be found—the returns certainly that have come before me establish it—that lands are purchased from the Natives at very much below what would be the value of similar land in the hands of Europeans. And I consider that the Frauds Prevention Acts have certainly the effect of reducing the price of the land of the Maoris and so of depriving the Natives of at least 25 per cent. of the monetary value of their land.

2082. *Mr. Carroll.*] What is the risk, Mr. Lewis, that causes that depreciation of 25 per cent.?—The risk is this: that the purchaser has not got a title, although he has paid the whole of his money, until his deed has passed the Trust Commissioner.

2083. *Mr. Rees.*] And the Trust Commissioner may send it back?—And there is the possibility of the Trust Commissioner withholding his certificate. In fact, I would go further, and say that I think that in ordinary transactions with Europeans it would be a thing unknown for the purchaser to pay the whole of his money and yet to have an uncertainty in the title. I think, moreover, that, generally speaking, the fact that in every case that goes before the Trust Commissioner the money has already been paid—that the purchase is practically complete—does not tend to make the Trust Commissioner's investigation all that it might be, supposing it was made before the money was parted with. My experience of the various Frauds Prevention Acts is that they in no way protect the interests of the Natives, because the ordinary law would enable the Maori to recover in case of any fraud, and the effect of keeping the title open until the Trust Commissioner's certificate is obtained is injurious and oppressive to the European, and in the case of the Maori leads, in my opinion, to the loss of at least 25 per cent. of the value of his land. The one important thing to be secured is that the Maori should not denude himself of his land; and this, I think, could be attained by the issue of a certificate from the Native Land Court that the Maori had sufficient other land for his maintenance than the portion which he proposed to deal with, which certificate could be shown to the purchaser, who could then proceed with the purchase under the ordinary laws. Some such provision would, in my opinion, be a great protection to the European purchaser, and very highly beneficial to the Maori by enabling him to secure a better price for his land.