

anything in the way of help, as it would only have the effect of plunging them into litigation, and I have therefore advised them to refrain from going to law in many instances.

2194. In cases such as that you have mentioned in connection with the Horowhenua Block, do you think it would be advisable to have some central Board created? I may tell you that the mind of the Commission is strongly directed towards recommending the establishment of a central North Island Board of three members, some of them appointed by the Government and some to be elected by the Natives, the duties of this Board being to give titles when the true owners have been ascertained. Do you think that all questions of undisclosed or inferential trusts should be added?—So long as the Natives of the block wish it, and so long as they have the power of giving directions as to how they desire the land to be administered. For example, take this question of the West Coast lands. The way in which these have been dealt with is most monstrous. Leases were confirmed by the Government under the West Coast Settlement Reserves Act; and yet in defiance of these contracts the Government of the day come to Parliament with a Bill giving rights of renewal and lowering for a time the rents; all this being done through pressure brought to bear by the tenants, and without the slightest reference to the Natives concerned. Now, if the State has the right to do that in respect of Native land, they have the right to do the same in respect of lands held by individual Europeans; but that would not be conceded for a moment. It seems to me, therefore, that the Maoris on the West Coast are simply being plundered.

2195. You were speaking of the legislation in respect of the West Coast leases?—Yes. I think it is absolutely necessary to give the Natives justice. Some of the late Acts, however, step in between landlord and tenant, and give the tenants rights which they never bargained for, and which are most unjust, and in respect of which the landlords—who are the Maoris—were not consulted. I would like to see how Europeans similarly treated would act. No one need wonder that after this the Natives are in a state of semi-rebellion when such things are done without their consent or knowledge.

2196. *Mr. Carroll.*] This was done under the Act of 1887?—Yes. I think when you appoint a Board such as you have mentioned there are two things which you have particularly to guard against. You must first of all pay attention to the fact that the Maori land is communal land, and that the Maori owners are tenants in common. They should, in the first place, appoint a committee to deal with the Board, and the Board ought not to deal with their land without consulting them. The Board ought always to obey their directions so far as sale and lease are concerned, but I do not know whether they ought to be obeyed as to the rents and the other terms of the leases, because the land ought to be put up to public competition under regulations, just the same as Crown lands are. I think the appointment of a Board is the proper thing to do. Of course we thought in 1886 it might be done by the ordinary Waste Lands Boards; but the Natives may not like to have their lands mixed up with those of the Crown. The point you have to guard against—and of course you know the facts better than I can tell them to you—is that you have to deal with a different civilisation from that which is familiar to Europeans, and a civilisation, too, that has been greatly altered and modified by the Europeans. Now, in the olden days the Maori chief was powerful because his word was practically law, while in later days the chieftain's power has greatly waned. It has not altogether gone. And, in addition to this, individualism has spread amongst the Maoris to a more considerable extent, I may say, than is now recognised, thus giving them the privileges of individual rights and individual ownerships; and you must therefore allow the right of appeal in these various matters from the committee, or amongst their hapus, to this Board, in case the majority might have, to use an expressive vulgarism, a "down" upon any particular Native. You must recognise to some extent the individual rights; and the difficulty the Board might have to face in dealing with all questions of title would be in the apportionment of the exact quantity of land, or in the apportionment of the money accruing from the land, that would belong to the individual Natives. That seems to me to be the only difficulty. Of course, in these matters the Board will have to take up duties which the Native Land Court Judges have been performing, and in respect of which, judging from their decisions, it seems to me that they have been acting on a rule of thumb. I do not blame the Judges on that account, for they have certainly a most difficult duty to perform in saying that this particular Native shall have 50 acres of the land and that other particular Native only 20 acres.

2197. We propose that the Native Committees shall do all this, subject, of course, to appeal on the part of any individuals who may think themselves aggrieved?—If it is made subject to appeal I do not object, because you must admit individual rights, and you cannot recognise communal rights as everything. The next thing you will have to guard against is the question of finance, and, in my opinion, all accounts ought to be audited by the Audit Department, which ought to report every year to the House on the Native accounts. Take, by way of illustration, the case of the West Coast Settlement leases. Very many of the people who were interested in the various blocks so dealt with understood that the result would be a matter of some pounds sterling per annum coming to each of them out of the different blocks. They have been disappointed in this hope, and they have really come to look upon it that their land has gone from them, because they are deriving so little advantage from it; and you will have, therefore, to be very careful in dealing with these lands, in seeing that, when you are cutting up individual lands for lease, there will be something appreciable coming to them out of the transaction. There should be a few pounds every year at least for each Native; otherwise the Native gets careless, and finds that he has nothing to get. You must be exceedingly careful also in the collection of your rents. There is another rock of difficulty ahead. These Native lands have to be made suitable for settlement. The Crown, in dealing with lands, has to pay for surveys, and has to make roads. If the Maoris are to have their lands alienated they ought to be so dealt with as to make provision for defraying the cost of surveys and road-construction, and that will be a great difficulty, because in many instances so many Natives are interested in a block that if you take away from the proceeds at one swoop the money required for these surveys and roads, several years must elapse before the