present time not more than 70,000 acres are being used. The trustees' hands are tied. The trustees are applying continually, but we can do nothing.

197. Why not?—Because we have to get, first of all, the consent of the Validation Court, then, when it is mortgaged, the consent of the mortgagees. It is a most difficult position, and the Validation Court has not seen its way to do anything for some considerable time past. Then, in relation to these blocks which seem to cause some alarm—the 9th clause. In relation to some of those blocks that are not under mortgage the trustees and the bank had agreed that certain amounts should be fixed upon these blocks, £2,000 for Mangapoike, £1,500 on Tahora, and some other amounts on other blocks; but we could not get the consent of the Validation Court Judge to this being done, although certain of those lands were indebted to the Bank of New Zealand Estates Company, and for titles and for improvements made. It has been a disappointment for all parties concerned. This Bill after becoming law will end it, and there can be no great danger of anything being done, inasmuch as everything is reduced to writing before the Maori Council can act with any land, and that writing must be agreed to and indorsed as a decree of the Validation Court. If in this Bill we introduce a clause, as Sir William Russell suggested, that land should be individualised immediately after the bank was paid, I am certain the Bill would not pass. That would be opposed by Parliament in both Houses. What we want to do is to stave off the present evil and give time on behalf of the Maoris and on behalf of the trustees. I have attempted to meet Mr. Bell and Mr. De Lautour on behalf of the bank, and we have endeavoured to give fair grounds for coming to the House for legislation. The bank will be met sufficiently and the Maoris will be met sufficiently, and, if it is necessary for the Legislature to make any such condition of individualisation, that can be done next year by an alteration in the Native-land laws, which could include it. All that is in the Bill as it now stands has been the subject of great consideration. I have had to give and take with the bank, the trustees, and the Natives. I do not want to be pushed to bringing all the powers of the Supreme Court, the Appeal Court, and the Privy Council. I am certain if the thing is done now the bank can be paid with the indefeasible titles. We have never had the indefeasible title, and this Bill gives it. It is fair to the public; it will throw open very great areas of land, principally in our district, to the satisfaction of everybody and to the district itself. Settle the question as to whether the money can be sufficiently invested, and whether the lands can be sufficiently improved. And now we ask that this Bill may be passed, so that the titles may be made sure, that the time may be given, and the money raised; then the bank gets its money, and the Natives get their estates, subject, of course, to the payment of interest and sinking fund and the money which they will have to provide. I may state that a very great financial company sent its agent—the bank paid £100 and the estate paid £100—and all went off on the question of this title. Otherwise we could have had the money to pay the bank right out at the beginning of this year.

198. When did you first suggest to the trustees that they should get legislation to bear on this question—that they should introduce this Bill?—For the past seven years. I saw Mr. Malet and Mr. Embling about three weeks ago; then I suggested that something should be done, and asked them to think it over. The next I heard was that Mr. Malet and Mr. Embling had seen Sir Joseph Ward. And then I came down, and I thought that if the bank would work with us we could get legislation.

199. Do you not see the impropriety of bringing down a Bill such as this and not giving the Committee an opportunity of going into it?—It is not impropriety, but a question of time.

200. Why not take time by the forelock?—We should have had to get a dozen more writs. One writ was used—the existing action—which still exists. That was issued in February, and came to trial, when the bank was ordered to give an account of the specific blocks.

201. Why has earlier notice not been given of a Bill of this description?—It should have been given, but it is only within the last fortnight or three weeks that we have come to any conclusion to act together; but, as you are aware, the matter has been petitioned about and spoken of in Governor's Speeches for a long time. If this be done now it saves the property.

202. If you, as solicitor to the trustees, wanted legislation, why was it not brought down sooner?—We had not the assent of the bank sooner, and to go in by ourselves and attempt to stop the bank without the bank's approval would not have been considered.

203. When did you first approach the bank with regard to this legislation?—I think about three weeks ago. I had spoken, I think, before about it.

204. How long ago?—About three weeks ago.

205. *Mr. A. L. D. Fraser.*] Is it correct to interpret this Bill, that on the passing of it the trustees' (Messrs. Carroll and Wi Pere) occupation is gone as trustees?—Yes; it ceases.

206. What does this mean, in section 11: "The terms and conditions of management, and of selling, leasing, mortgaging, improving, or otherwise dealing with the said lands, and of all properties by this Act vested or hereafter to be vested in the Maori Council, shall be agreed upon between the trustees or beneficiaries and the Council by deed; but, so far as relates to securities and lands vested in the trustees, either alone or with others, by decrees of the Validation Court, they shall have no force or effect until approved of by the Validation Court at Gisborne by order under the seal of the Court and signed by the Judge thereof." You have placed the sale in the hands of the Council and the trustees: who are they?—Messrs. Carroll and Wi Pere, for the purposes of that section.

207. You said that if this Act passes their functions will cease?—They have the power to frame a deed, subject to the Validation Court. Their title as trustees ceases.

208. Then, you say that the terms and conditions of management, and of selling, leasing, mortgaging, and improving, have to be by deed between Messrs. Carroll and Wi Pere on the one part and the Council on the other?—Yes.

209. What is the necessity for the Council then: why should the trustees not continue?—Because the object is to put the title of the properties in the hands of a corporate body constituted by statute.