

80. *Sir W. R. Russell.*] Mrs. Thompson, to take her case, has a great number of interests in different localities. That prevents her from being a good farmer. If you could concentrate the whole of her holdings into one farm she might have a farm that would pay her to work, and be a good farmer?—But you would be giving to her the interests of some of the other Natives in Hapotiki. It might be done if she could come to terms with them.

81. Do you not think the Legislature ought to interfere in this matter?—I do not think it should, because the Natives may have a sentimental interest in some of the land. It would be in only a small percentage of cases where power to consolidate Natives' interests would be availed of.

82. You think the Maori Council could not arrange some scheme by which the whole of the country should be mapped out into divisions belonging to the different?—There would be again the difficulty of subdivision on a Native's death. The Natives have intermarried, and are so interwoven that I think there would be very great difficulty.

83. It seems that the condition of affairs in reference to the West Coast Settlement lands is very bad—that is inevitable, no doubt?—It was the intention that the Natives should have some lands for their own use, and lease the balance and get rent from it.

84. If the object of the Act was to settle the Native people upon the land, the administration, under which it cannot be divided, prevents the very settlement which the Act was passed to insure?—I think not. I think the lands have been very well settled, and the Natives have, wherever they have wished it, had the land for their own use.

85. What is the good of 120 shares, amounting to only 20 acres, say?—That is something.

86. Surely they could be transferred to some other block?—I do not think it is possible at all. I think the sentiment of the Natives for particular interests, and the difficulty of getting them to agree to exchange, would be insurmountable barriers.

87. *Mr. Herries.*] Has your office ever tried it?—Has the Agent ever explained to the Natives that this Act is in force?—We have a few cases of exchange, but these have been very small. For instance, if a Native was going to marry into another hapu, he would exchange a piece of ground with another Native.

88. Have the Natives knowledge of this power to exchange?—Yes; they exchange sometimes.

89. In Mrs. Thompson's case, if her interests were all consolidated into one, all these expenses that you referred to would not occur?—If Mrs. Thompson got some Natives to agree to an exchange there would be no objection whatever.

90. Supposing all the interests were consolidated in one block, all these expenses that you have mentioned would not occur?—No.

91. The expenses of £40 a year that you mention would be due to the dissemination of the interests, to a large extent?—Yes, of course; there are so many Natives interested in each block.

92. If Mrs. Thompson got her title individualised—supposing that could happen—the expenses would be very small as regards?—The cost of the individualisation of the title would swallow up most of the Natives' income for many years.

93. The expenses of £40 that you mention would be due to the dissemination of the interests?—Yes; to the multiplicity of interests.

94. And if the interests were consolidated?—If each Native on the West Coast could have a piece of land of his own and do as he liked with it, then it would be all right.

95. If he had a piece of land of his own and could do what he liked with it, then the expense would be very small?—Yes; there would hardly be any.

96. Less than 6½ per cent.?—If the Natives dealt with the land themselves the expense would be less, because they would not have all the work to do. If Mrs. Thompson had, say, 60 acres to herself, and was able to deal with the area, there would be no commission.

97. *Hon. Mr. Carroll.*] Where the Natives' interests are separated over different blocks and those blocks are under lease, there would be no immediate benefit by consolidation?—No; it is impossible with them now.

98. There would be no immediate benefit by consolidation, except, of course, that it would lessen the cost of collection and distribution?—Yes. Say there were 200 Natives interested in a grant and each had 10 acres, it would simplify matters.

99. But that would be the only benefit to accrue from consolidation where the different interests are leased?—Yes. It would lessen expense, probably.

100. The only object in consolidation that would be of any special advantage to the owner would be that he or she may live on the land and occupy it?—Yes.

101. But while the land is under lease that is impossible?—Yes; it is impossible. We reserve enough for occupation, as I said before.

102. To get over that difficulty you are empowered to issue occupation licenses?—Yes.

103. To issue them to the Natives there, irrespective of the particular allocation of their interests or the locality?—Yes; we adjust that afterwards. For instance, a Native has, say, ten shares in a block. He says the 10 acres are not enough and he wants 50. He gets 50, and then he has to pay rent to the others who own the 40.

104. Where a Native requires 50 acres for farming you give him that under an occupation license?—Yes.

105. That is simpler and better in every way than endeavouring to consolidate the Natives' interests in any particular block?—Ever so much. There is no expense. It satisfies the Native who *bond fide* wishes to occupy the land.

106. When you give 50 acres under an occupation license in that manner, you select the piece not according to its individual boundaries or the interests of the individual owners, but in a suitable position and area?—Yes; the best home we have for a Native. It has been remarked that the Natives