

the present rental for all time. We have the sympathy of every freeholder in Greymouth. The idea is that the borough should buy, and become trustees for the lessees. The aim is that the lessees should get the full benefit of their industry and enterprise.

9. *The Chairman.*] Have they had public meetings in connection with this matter—well-attended meetings?—Yes; we have had representative meetings.

10. Have you had representative meetings that were unanimous? It was pointed out that the feeling was, in Greymouth, that the lessees should be given any benefit attaching to the land?—The Maoris have got the benefit.

11. Do the Maoris pay any rates for any properties in the borough?—No, they do not. £76,541 was spent in forming streets and making other improvements to the town.

12. *Hon. Mr. Carroll.*] You may know that in 1881 there was a serious depreciation of property in Greymouth, and reductions in rent were made up to 25 per cent., and, as regards the rents to-day, they stand at £3,000, which is less than they were in 1887. Well, that covers a good period of time, does it not?—That is so.

13. But you say that the borough should take over the land as trustees for the tenants. Would that not be an extraordinary arrangement?—We are in a most extraordinary position now.

14. If the borough took it at all, in any legislation that body would take the place of the trustees. Well, supposing that was an acceptable position, would you say it was right that the tenants and the borough should be allowed to sublet areas that they were tenants on? What obtains at present is that many of the tenants subdivide, and let their lands at a profit?—A man comes to you and offers a price. His first question is, what are you going to apportion your rent at? Really it is not a matter of letting at a profit.

15. There has been a good deal of subletting?—Yes; the land is getting cut up.

16. At the present time the tenants have nothing to complain of. In fact, they make a little?—People who left the town twenty years ago are better off than those who held on.

17. Well, to anticipate: If the borough bought the freehold, the borough should be the absolute owner?—The lessees form a very material part of the borough.

18. *Mr. Rhodes.*] And they could fix their own rent. With regard to the 5 acres spoken of as having been sold for £75, was that at the end of the twenty-five-years term?—I think there were five or six years to run. The land in question was cleared and in grass.

19. *Hon. Mr. Ngata.*] Would the borough be prepared to put detailed proposals before the Committee in forty-eight hours?—Well, the borough would be prepared to do so in a reasonable time.

20. There is no suggestion that the land should be taken without the sanction of the Native beneficiaries?—They seem reluctant about parting with the freehold.

21. If the Public Trustee realised, would not the Natives still have Arahura?—Well, if they had money they could get land elsewhere.

22. Suppose they were opposed to giving up the land, what would be the position then?—Well, the same treatment should be given to both races.

23. Whether the Natives consent or not, you want to get the freehold?—Yes, at a fair price.

24. What do you mean by that?—At a fair market value—at a price that would bring in at $4\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. not less than the present rents amount to.

25. What about the present unimproved value?—We are prepared to take over the Native Reserve.

26. *Hon. Mr. Carroll.*] As regards the question of value, supposing it had reached the stage that allowed of the machinery of the Public Works Act being put in motion, would you be satisfied with any award made by that tribunal?—Personally, I cannot say what the Council would do in the matter.

27. It would be sufficient for the purpose if you can say that the Natives would get fair compensation?—We got on very well with the Public Trustee, but we see rocks ahead. We have been waiting now for thirty years to see Greymouth come to something.

28. *Hon. Mr. Ngata.*] You have no objection to the Natives being the owners of the property?—No; we entertain no objection on that point.

29. *Dr. Te Rangihiroa.*] If the land belonged to the Borough Council, do you think 5 per cent. would be fair on the unimproved value? Do you think it would be an excessive rent?—I think $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. would be a reasonable return.

30. Well, you think then that £3 15s. per cent. is excessive under the circumstances?—Well, I think so.

31. *Hon. Mr. Carroll.*] The suggestion is that a general move should be made by the corporate body in Greymouth? What do you say?—We could have a resolution from the Borough Council placed before this Committee in three weeks.

Hon. Mr. Guinness: We could get it by wire by Wednesday next. I can guarantee that.

32. *The Chairman.*] Have any overtures been made to the Maoris by meeting?—We have talked it over with a few of them.

33. *Dr. Te Rangihiroa.*] After you had agitated to bring the matter before Parliament?—Yes.

34. *The Chairman.*] What is the general feeling among the Natives?—They seemed disinclined to part with the freehold.

35. *Mr. Greenslade.*] Supposing you got longer leases, would that satisfy you?—I am afraid it would not. There is a very bitter feeling in Greymouth on the matter.

36. *Mr. Poynton.*] Is it not a fact that you have recently sold a piece of your leasehold for £100?—Yes, that is correct; but the apportioned ground-rent is only £1 per year.