

Government undertake to deal moderately with the lessees, and undertake that all interests would be protected.

94. That would not require legislation, because the Government have power now to deal with Native land?—That may be the simplest way of dealing with the whole matter.

95. There is another thing with regard to the freehold: Is your objection to this system on the general ground of freehold and leasehold, or is it because you consider it is badly administered?—No, I would not say it is badly administered, but I am inclined to think it would be in the best interests of the town and progress if they had the freehold. For instance, I have a business place there myself, and I would have built an establishment there costing me £4,000 or £6,000, but owing to the present tenure I would not do so.

96. You think all land should be freehold?—I think every man should own his own land, even if it is only a garden.

97. The Borough Council have also reserves in the township?—Yes.

98. Are they leasehold or freehold?—That is the property of the borough, and they cannot dispose of them.

99. Would it not be an advantage to the tenants of the borough if the tenant could get the freehold and put up good buildings?—If you had followed what I have said you would see I have settled that question—the borough has taken no advantage of the tenant.

100. Then you consider it is administered in a wrong direction?—They are not so craving in their demand for large rentals.

101. Would it not apply equally to the Native Reserve as to the Borough Reserve in the putting-up of good buildings?—No. You have the instance in regard to the Westport Coal Reserve leases.

102. Would it not be better for the Town of Westport if that was freehold?—I do not think so; the rent cannot be increased more than £10.

103. Then, in some cases the leasehold is equally as good as the freehold?—Yes, in connection with the land held by the borough.

104. Then, we come to this: that it is only this leasehold that you want dealt with—you do not want all the leaseholds in the borough dealt with?—No.

105. But do you not think we might equally deal with those?—No; I think the borough will deal fairly with them.

106. You think you have not been dealt with fairly by the Public Trustee?—I would not say that; we are prepared for the storm.

107. *Mr. Greenslade.*] I think you have no objection to the landlord because he is a Maori?—No, none at all. I might say that they are a race that I appreciate very much.

108. You were saying just now that you thought the borough reserves were in a different position, and that you would not advocate granting the freehold in those cases?—Yes.

109. In the Borough of Hamilton the Church of England has a property in the main street, and the leases are almost in a similar position to those leases you have in Greymouth—the term is for twenty-one years, full value for improvements, and revaluation in twenty-one years. In those cases do you think the freehold should be given?—Being a church, I would not interfere.

110. *Hon. Mr. Carroll.*] In the event of the freehold passing to the present tenants because they urge it on the ground that it would be more satisfactory to the tenants that the freehold should be theirs, then, in the event of their leasing to others, would you concede the same rights to your future tenants that you claim now?—Oh, yes! certainly. Every tenant should have the right to acquire the property.

111. Then, you would be agreeable if provision were made in any legislation bringing this into effect that the present tenants if they become freeholders should in all future dealings when leasing to others confer the same right on them that they themselves are now asking for?—Yes, in all cases. Upon that question I might give my own opinion, but this does not bind the Council. It is my desire that this should be carried into effect, but not that the administration of this land should be left to the Council altogether. I would advocate handing it over to the lessees, who should create a trust, and the Chairman of the Council should be a trustee of that trust.

112. If you are a freeholder you cannot use all you have, but would have to lease portions of it, and in every such lease you would put in such a condition that the tenant could claim the freehold?—Yes.

113. On the same terms that you now desire to procure the freehold—with no increase in the value?—In answer to that question I might say I have four people who leased a piece of land from me forty years ago. The leases expired some twenty-one years ago, and from that time up to now they have not got a new lease because they would not go to the trouble of getting one, although I could have taken possession of the whole property.

114. You would not mind any provision in law governing such future provision as I speak of?—Every lessee should be protected.

115. And he should have the freehold any time he likes it?—Yes, at any time.

116. And when the present tenants get the freehold you would make it impossible for any leasehold in the future?—I do not see how you could make it impossible.

117. Excepting as a temporary tenure?—Yes.

118. *Mr. Herries.*] You would not advocate repealing the Act altogether, and allowing the lessees to deal with the Natives direct?—That is a question I have given consideration to, but I would rather not express my opinion unless I am asked a direct question. I think the Native race are quite as intelligent and able to look after their own affairs as we are, and it is surprising to