

9. When the lease was arranged were the Natives satisfied with what had been done in the matter by the Public Trustee?—The Natives were not satisfied with the arrangement made by the Public Trustee. The reasons of their dissatisfaction are set forth in their petition; the statements made in their petition are evidence that they were not satisfied.

10. What rent is due now on the land?—I do not recollect the amount. Ten years have elapsed; now we have entered upon a fresh term. For the last term that has just expired the rent was 6s. 6d. an acre. That, however, has been raised, as we have entered upon a third term.

11. And you say that a charge of 1s. 6d. in the pound is made by the Public Trustee against that money?—Yes.

12. Can you inform the Committee what back-rent is due to you?—I could not inform you of the exact amount without going into a calculation.

13. Do you know how many Natives receive a portion of this rent?—The whole of the people in the Crown grant.

14. Is it divided equally among them?—No; the shares are not equal. The shares have been ascertained; some have five acres, some ten acres, some seventeen acres, some forty acres, and so on.

15. I suppose you have other land?—Yes, we hold other land; but all the best portions have been leased to Europeans.

16. You state that “formerly” you were allowed to receive the rents yourselves: that was, I presume, before the land went through the Court?—This land had never been before the Court.

17. It must have been before some Court.

*Mr. Carroll:* For a long time the natives leased the land themselves. Then the land was brought under the operation of the West Coast Settlements Act: it then came under the administration of the Public Trustee, under a legal construction placed on that Act.

*The Chairman:* They ask that when the lease expires they may be allowed to take possession of the land again and manage it themselves.

*Mr. Ballance:* They have been asking for that for some time past.

*Witness:* What we wish is that this land should come back to us so that we may occupy it, sow seed upon it, or put stock upon it.

18. *Mr. Ballance:* I would ask the witness whether there is any disposition among the owners of this land, or among Natives generally, to cultivate their lands themselves?—There is a very strong desire on the part of the Natives to cultivate these lands, to grow wheat upon it, to put stock upon it, for themselves; but the portions of land now occupied by them are inferior bush land, upon which we can neither grow wheat nor put stock.

19. Have you not some land which you are now cultivating?—Yes; we have some small portions—perhaps fifty or one hundred acres. There are about one hundred men, women, and children cultivating.

20. *Mr. Ballance:* Do you know of any promise made when these leases were granted for a renewal of them to the occupiers?—Some people did agree that the leases should be renewed, others did not. I myself objected very strongly. You, Mr. Ballance, will remember my objection to the execution of a new lease to a piece of land called Haututu. But Mr. Reynolds, the Commissioner, has informed us that when the present lease expires these lands will be re-leased. We object to that. We oppose that being done, and the European lessees have told us that the land will never come back to us: that they are about to get a renewal of their leases. This statement has troubled us very much.

21. *The Chairman:* Have the Native owners made application to the Native Land Court to have their title individualised?—Some of us have applied to have our shares individualised, but there has been some disputing among the Natives, so that the application was not unanimous; some of the Natives opposed the individualisation of the shares.

22. Did you apply?—Yes.

23. You say in your petition that the rents are not paid until three or four months after becoming due: is that correct?—That is the case. I would ask you to look at the present lease which is now in force, which proves that the rents should be paid in August; they have not yet been paid.

24. *Mr. Ballance:* Are you aware of a regulation to the effect that the rents shall be paid by the Trustee on the date they are due, whether the lessees have paid their rent or not?—But the money has not been paid notwithstanding. It is this delay in getting their money that makes the Natives so dissatisfied.

25. If the money were paid punctually, would that satisfy the Natives?—We would still object to the deduction of 1s. 6d. in the pound, and we would still insist that the land should revert to us at the expiration of the lease.

26. *Mr. Carroll:* These are the objects for which you petition?—The real meaning of our petition is this: We wish to have the administration of our own lands. Seeing that the Government have taken the bulk of our lands, we should have the administration of the small portion remaining to us. We shall never sell these lands: if returned to us, we should ask that a restriction should be put upon the sale of them, at the same time that we should have powers to lease.

27. *Mr. Taipua:* What are the real grievances you have to complain of in regard to the administration of these lands by the Trustee?—We complain that a commission is charged to us for collecting these rents, seeing that we never asked the Government to collect these rents; that the rents are not paid to us at the proper time; and we desire to get back these lands when the lease shall have expired. We pointed out to Mr. Ballance that it was not just that we should be made to pay 1s. 6d. in the pound. Seeing that we never set up the Public Trustee to look after our lands, why therefore should we pay commission? It is not our wish that this money should be placed in the hands of the Public Trustee. I said to Mr. Ballance that if he had any consideration for the Maoris, inasmuch as he appointed persons to look after their interests, he ought to pay the charges.