

this kind should remain in the hands of the Public Trustee, or some similar management?—I consider that the old state of affairs among the Natives would be reverted to: that the chiefs who assumed the direction—some of whom are not regarded as leading chiefs by the whole tribe—would receive the full rents from the tenants, and would retain most of the money themselves, giving the women and children nothing. They would perhaps give 5s. here and there, or £1. They carried on their affairs in that way with the old leases which are now confirmed, when I was up the Coast acting as Reserves Trustee. To revert to such a state of things as that would be a great injustice and injury to the whole of the grantees.

3010. Do you consider that the patriarchal method of dealing with these rents or funds is compatible with the present state and condition of the Natives?—Certainly not.

3011. You have arrived at that opinion from independent observation?—From independent observation.

3012. *Mr. Parata.*] You would not have that opinion where the land is not held in common?—Under the grants these lands are held in common.

3013. You would not split the Crown grant?—I can instance a good many cases where Natives have received separate Crown grants of specific areas, as in the case of Manaia. He has a grant of 400 or 500 acres.

3014. Do you not think he could manage for himself without any one managing for him?—I know that he was very glad to let me lease his land for him; but he is a Native in ten thousand. He is the only Native I ever met with on the West Coast that could be strictly called “prudent,” and had money in the bank.

3015. *Hon. Mr. Acland.*] Do you think he would be able to manage?—I think he would be; but, as I have said, he is a Native in ten thousand.

3016. *Hon. Captain Kenny.*] Do you think, because of the action of a section of the chiefs who might be supposed to know the interests of the hapus, that the Natives should not be trusted with the management of their lands?—I do not think they would distribute the money so impartially as the Public Trustee.

3017. What means has the Public Trustee of knowing who should receive the money?—He knows all the shares. They are all ascertained, and he pays according to the individual shares.

3018. *Mr. Peacock.*] Do you say that the principle which formerly obtained was one under which the Natives did not receive their fair proportion?—Yes. It is some of the chiefs, or some persons influencing them, who have instigated this movement. The body of the Natives take no part in it; but there are some Natives who, if they get hold of the money, the other Natives would get very little of it.

3019. *Mr. Stewart.*] What do you say to the allegation that a number of persons are entitled whose names are not in the Crown grant, and when they went to the Native Land Court they were refused relief on the grounds that it was a special concession?—That can be explained, I think, by a reference to the proceedings of the Native Land Court which sat at Hawera in February, 1887, at which a Native chief named Patohe appealed against “the partition of interests” in the Whareroa Reserve which had been made by the Reserves Trustee under section 15 of “The West Coast Settlement Reserves Act, 1884,” and in which judgment was given against the appellant. I shall try to get a report of the case to lay before the Committee.

3020. *Hon. Captain Kenny.*] Would the Trustee consider himself to ignore the rights of Natives if he distributed money to persons who, however much entitled, were not named in the grant?—Certainly not.

3021. *Mr. Rennell.*] But a Native chief could ignore the rights of other Natives?—I think the Committee could get much better information than I can give them on this subject from Mr. Rennell, the present Reserves Trustee. I have had nothing to do with payments to Natives. This question was not ripe enough for dealing with when I relinquished the office of Reserves Trustee.

3022. *Hon. the Chairman.*] Do you consider that, in the event of these reserves remaining under the management of the Public Trust Office—which, so far as I can understand, practically represents a land agent for the management of land—that, in respect of the collection and distribution of rents among the owners, you could devise a better working machinery than the Public Trust Office provides for the purpose?—If you give me some time perhaps I could formulate something.

3023. I think your opinion on the subject would be of value. What I want to find out is whether, in your judgment, the present system works well, or whether a better system could be devised?—It is a very important question—it is a question I would like to think over. I will think it out, and if the Committee wish it I will place before them my ideas on the subject.

3024. *Hon. Captain Kenny.*] When you were Reserves Trustee, did you have an opportunity of inquiring into the general condition of the Natives as regards lands to live on?—Yes.

3025. And what conclusion did you arrive at?—I arrived at the conclusion that there was sufficient land left for their maintenance after leasing the blocks now under lease, and that there is ample land in the reserves for the whole body of Natives—more than ample.

3026. So that the rents they get would be actually more than is required by them?—Certainly.

*Statement of W. Rennell, Reserves Trustee. Read by the Hon. the Chairman.*

My statement will be in reference to the charges against the management of the Public Trustee, and in reference to the changes proposed by the Native petitioners so far as I have heard them. The charges are that the Public Trustee has let too much land, and has not left the Natives sufficient for their support; that rents are not promptly collected. There are, as the Committee is aware, two classes of leases—those direct from the Public Trustee, numbering 231 leases; and confirmed leases, numbering about 53 leases. No Natives are without land through