

239. *Mr. Mackay.*] Do you think the voting in the appointment of such a Committee should be carried out in the same way as the voting for a member of the House of Representatives?—That mode of election would be very good. I am, however, inclined to think it would be better for the Court to appoint the Committees, because such a large amount of time would be taken up if the Committees were to be elected on the same principle as members elected to the House. Perhaps twelve months might be occupied in the election of the various Committees.

240. I understand that the various hapus would appoint their own Committees?—Different hapus might be interested in a great number of blocks, but every hapu's claims would be varying in character—one hapu might have a claim through one particular ancestor, and another hapu might claim through a totally different ancestor.

241. Supposing that No. 1 hapu, besides having an interest in Block A, has also an interest in Block C, belonging to No. 3 hapu, No. 1 hapu will have a vote in the appointment of Committee for each block?—For instance, one hapu might own this particular block solely, and then in another block it might only have a partial interest jointly, with several other hapus.

242. That is quite true, but we must get at finality. What is the largest block of land in your district in which one title could be obtained?—Some hapus have 5,000 acres, some 10,000 acres, some 50,000 acres, and some perhaps 3,000 acres, but that land would not be in one piece. The one hapu would own that land, but not in the one block.

242A. Could not each hapu vote for its own Committee?—If each hapu elected its own Committee, this would happen: that, inasmuch as in some blocks there would be three hapus owning, it follows that three Committees would have to be elected were each hapu to elect its own Committee; and, in the case of five hapus being interested in the one block, five Committees would have to be elected.

243. Would not that tend to a more satisfactory dealing with the land than if there was a Committee elected for the whole five hapus?—No; I think the better plan, where five hapus are interested in the one block, is that each hapu should choose certain of its members to serve upon the Committee. There could be one Committee, and one Government officer, and one system of working in unison. I think, if Parliament were to pass a law empowering Committees to act in the manner suggested, along with a Government officer, then all the difficulties in regard to the various dealings with Native lands would disappear, or, at any rate, there would be very few of them; and there would be no necessity for the existence of such laws as the Native Lands Frauds Prevention Act.

244. *Mr. Rees.*] Should the Committees, in your opinion, have power, when the lands were being cut up, to choose cultivations for the people, or even, beyond that, should they have power to choose what lands individuals among their hapus should utilise as cultivations or sheep-farms?—Yes, I quite agree with that being done—that the Committee should have the power to make the reservations you have mentioned. And I would add to that that in cases where some of the owners had objection to make it would be better for the Court to cut their pieces out, so as not to interfere with the Committee generally; because there might be many people who would wish to have their own portions cut out. Of course that would only apply to those who made formal application, and persisted in having their individual interests allocated in severalty. If a great number of owners desired to have their lands operated on by a Committee, it would be well to reserve what particular portions they would require as permanent places of abode for themselves, and to hand the balance over to the Committee to be dealt with.

245. Do you think the Maoris would desire the assistance of the Government to provide moneys for the improving of such lands as they wish to keep, such moneys to be borrowed at a cheap rate of interest, and to be applied, under proper restrictions, towards putting the land under cultivation or into grass; these loans, of course, to be a charge upon the land?—I have advocated that course very strongly. In the year 1886 the Hon. Mr. Ballance arrived at Waioamatani. In the presence of Mr. Ballance and the Ngatiporou Tribe I made application to him at that time that his Government should assist the Natives by letting them have moneys for the purpose of utilising their lands—to assist them in improving their lands, and in bringing them under cultivation. These words of mine were reported by the shorthand-writer who was accompanying the Hon. Mr. Ballance at that time. I am still of the opinion that the Government should either let the Natives themselves have the money, or obtain it for them from people who would be willing to advance it by way of mortgage upon the lands owned by the Natives; that the expenditure of that money should be controlled jointly by the Committee and the Government officer; that from the subsequent produce of the land the interest should be paid; and that by these means there would be a splendid opportunity of largely enhancing the general prosperity of the colony.

246. Should the Government, in your opinion, perform all the surveys necessary for carrying these settlements into effect, paying the costs and charging them upon the various lands, getting the work done as cheaply and as effectively as possible?—I think that that would be the proper course to pursue—the Government to conduct the surveys and charge the cost against the lands surveyed, and that the Natives would have the opportunity of paying off the survey charges, should they be able to do so, out of moneys arising from dealings in connection with the lands. As this question bears upon the subject of surveys, perhaps it is as well that I should express my opinion fully upon that subject. I think that the Surveyor-General should cease to issue authorities to surveyors to survey land that they may be requested to survey upon the application of Natives. The clear and better course, to my mind, would be that in all cases where Natives desired surveys to be made a proper agreement should be drawn up between the Natives and the surveyor, with the demands of the surveyor fully set out in it; that the agreement be submitted to the Surveyor-General, and, if he sees that it is a fair agreement and approves of the terms of it, the surveyor should then be authorised to go on with the work, but not otherwise. I have seen the troubles that have arisen out of this survey business. The trouble is this: that in cases of surveys a few of the owners have acted along with the surveyor who wished to get the work; that the surveyor had paid them a per-