

officer in dealing with the land—of course after ample reserves have been made—and the Government officer to be responsible for the due distribution of the moneys derivable from the transaction?—That would be far more feasible than attempting to deal with five or six hapus owning one large block.

1027. Is there anything you would like to suggest to us?—Well, although I am not a surveyor, still I have suffered a great deal through lying out of the money chargeable for Native surveys. Subsequently I have lost it.

1028. Can you say from your own personal knowledge and experience that this survey difficulty is a widely-felt matter?—I should say it is. I have so often suffered myself, and been unable to recover the money.

1029. Not merely from one survey?—No.

1030. Do you think, if the Government were to pay these survey-charges, where they have been properly incurred, it would be a wise thing in the interests of the Government and of the Natives themselves, as well as of the surveyors?—If the Government had proper security for the money.

1031. They could take security over the land?—Yes.

1032. The Natives would not be put to such expense, as an end would thus be made of suits for the recovery of these charges?—Decidedly. The Natives are very ready to sign an agreement for a survey, not thinking at all of the day of payment.

1033. I suppose you know of numbers of instances in which the surveyors have sued the Natives on these survey-charges?—I have heard of several in this district.

1034. Then, costs would be heaped upon them?—Yes.

1035. Besides the surveyors being unable to keep their engagements with other people by reason of the money they have earned not being paid?—Yes, and the interest accrues under a recent Act.

1036. I suppose you would say, if representative Committees were chosen to deal with all those matters relating to the land, or a central body partly appointed by the Legislature and partly by the Maoris themselves, its power being surrounded with due restrictions, so that the money derived from the land should be properly distributed amongst the Natives interested, the plan would be likely to work well?—Well, yes. Of course, in all these land-purchase matters there are generally one or two Natives who have to take the whole onus of putting the land through the Court, and very often all the expenses connected with the affair from start to finish are borne by them, so that in talking of a distribution of the proceeds it would be hardly fair to these people who find the money to pay the incidental expenses, besides, perhaps, feeding those for whom they are acting, should have no consideration given them for this expenditure, and that the others should be allowed to reap the benefit of their expenditure.

1037. The claims of these people should be taken into consideration?—Decidedly. It is almost invariably the case that a few such people have to bear the whole cost of getting the land through the Court. You will find that perhaps one man in such a case will find the money. I know that, in the case of the Whakamaru Block, Hitiri te Paerata not only bore all the expense of putting the land through the Court, but that he had also to keep his people during the whole time the case was under adjudication—months together. And in other parts—in the Taupo district, for instance—there are cases of just the same character. There was no necessity for all those people to come to the Court, but they all came nevertheless, and he had to feed them all. I suppose that means that the expense entailed upon him of getting through two blocks, roughly amounting to 150,000 acres, must have come to £5,000 from start to finish. It would be hardly fair, therefore, to put him on the same footing in the distribution of the proceeds as those who had not spent a single shilling.

1038. Of course it would be manifestly unjust. Is there anything else you would like to suggest?—Not at present. If anything further strikes me I might make a communication to you.

KAWAKAWA, 1ST APRIL, 1891.

MARY TAUTARI sworn and examined.

1039. *Mr. Rees.*] Are you a native of this district?—Of Hokianga.

1040. I suppose you have some knowledge of the methods in which matters are conducted in the Native Land Court?—Yes.

1041. In contested cases between the tribes and hapus?—Yes.

1042. The Native land in this district belongs mainly to the Ngapuhi, does it not?—Yes.

1043. What are the cases to be decided usually—hapu boundaries?—Yes. There are various sub-tribes as well, but they are all Ngapuhi.

1044. Is the working of the Native Land Court satisfactory in determining these sub-tribal and hapu boundaries?—No, and for this reason: The man who has acquired a knowledge of how to act in the Land Court carries his claim to the land to a successful issue, while those who are deficient in that kind of knowledge fail to establish their claims, and thus lose the land of which in many instances they are the rightful owners.

1045. Do you mean to say that clever and unscrupulous people know how to so manage their claims before the Court as absolutely to obtain judgment in their favour by making a fair appearance?—Yes. I have myself gone to the Native Land Court, and sat there during the progress of a case, just to see how it went on, and I have actually seen people who ought to have had the land absolutely lose it. It is the cross-questioning that kills them. It is impossible for them to answer it. If, however, a proper inquiry were made, I am certain every one would get his rights.

1046. What do you mean by "a proper inquiry?" Do you mean an inquiry conducted by the heads of the tribes?—Yes, I mean an inquiry at a general runanga, which should have the necessary authority for the purpose.