

less, it takes then almost as much to clear it, and to keep it clear, as it is worth. Still, that is no excuse for leaving it in its present position; and especially is that the case in districts where small local bodies have been set up. Many of these bodies have borrowed money on the security of their rates for the purpose of opening up roads through these very lands. Frequently, as much as one-third, or even one-half, of the whole extent of a road will lie through this land. The local bodies receive no rates from it—or where they do, the amount is only nominal—and this furze-covered land is a serious hindrance to settlement; whereas, if it was cleared and put under cultivation it would become of more and more assistance, year by year, as it increased in value, in enabling the neighbouring owners to extend their roads, and thus advance the settlement of the country. This drawback is greatly felt in the neighbourhood of Taranaki where the rates of the small Road Boards yield but small sums, where the number of these bodies is many, and where the land is greatly overgrown with furze.

1275. You are now entering upon another defined portion of your remarks. Would you just allow me to break in with one or two things? In relation to this Board of which you speak: Supposing the Legislature should be in favour of appointing a Board which should manage the Maori lands, you think that the Maoris would demand direct representation on this Board?—I think they should have direct representation on it. I think they should have a small representation.

1276. Then, do you think it would suit the Maoris as well as the Europeans if the remaining members of the Board were appointed by the Government?—I think so myself, because from year to year the interests of the European settlers in Native lands as distinguished from those of the Native owners would become less and less, and it must be recognised that the main interest to be considered is the interest of the colony as a whole, and anything which tends to the settlement of these lands is in the interest both of the State and of the individual owners and occupiers.

1277. Then, if you have a small representation of the Maoris on this Board, you consider that the remainder of the Board should be appointed by and be responsible to the Government of the country?—I think so, certainly. It seems to me that a Board of three, one selected by the Maori owners and two appointed by the Government, would be sufficient.

1278. In relation to individualisation, do you mean that every Native's part should be cut off the reserve and a distinct title made out for it, or do you mean that the individual interests should be ascertained and fixed?—I think all that is necessary is that the individual interests should be ascertained.

1279. Not surveyed?—No.

1280. But a list should be prepared—of course I am only suggesting this to you—just the same, in fact, as you would have of the shareholders of a joint stock company, showing the amount of shares, the total aggregate value, and the number of shares belonging to or held by the individuals?—That is the sense in which I recommend that individualisation should be carried out in the case of the West Coast Settlement Reserves; but I should wish individualisation in a more extended sense when we talk of these other Native lands. I do not recommend it for these West Coast reserves, because the holdings are not sufficiently large to make the individual share in each particular block at all worth while to cut out.

1281. Then, you mean that you would have for each Native his proportion fixed in relation to the whole?—Yes.

1282. Then, if when this Board or any Commissioner were appointed, and an absolute method of transfer of title between them—of exchange, in fact, from one district to another—were provided, it would tend to localise and settle the different hapus possessing these lands in their own places of abode. It would prevent them from sharing the titles to other blocks, and would compel them peacefully and quietly to settle in their own particular places?—Yes, and thus encourage thrift and industry.

1283. Because every man would know the persons with whom he was joined in the ownership of the land, and would be one with them in interest?—Yes.

1284. I do not think I need ask any questions with regard to other transactions; whilst in regard to the case of Natives who are capable of managing their own affairs we all thoroughly understand what you mean by that. What you suggest, except the method of making up these lists of owners and their proportionate interests, and having the thing put in that way, has also been suggested to us by other witnesses. That is the only new thing. The present state of things has been a perpetual sore both among half-castes and among the capable full-blooded Maoris themselves. It has been a perpetual reproach that they should be ranked with men and women who are old and incapable of looking after themselves—that they should be dealt with and managed like children in a nursery. In fact, the Legislature has gone still further recently and made even a bill of sale or anything of that sort subject to the same formalities, which seems to me incomprehensible. Then, you, as one having experience in these matters, seriously and absolutely urge the Commissioners to report in this fashion with the view of securing amended legislation?—Unquestionably; no tinkering, in my opinion, will be of any use. Year after year we have been trying to amend these laws, with the view of removing injustice and encouraging settlement, and I have no hesitation in saying that all such amending legislation has been a complete failure. Nothing will give adequate relief to the European settlers or to the Maoris except the sweeping away of the legislation of the past and starting afresh. With regard to that last statement as to the necessity for a radical change with regard to the Native-land laws generally, I repeat that most emphatically. I am sure that in speaking before the Commissioners I see here you will all agree with me. In the House of Representatives, the session before last, when the late Government promised to appoint a Royal Commission for the purpose of considering the particular questions that are now being considered, I took the opportunity of repeating what I had frequently previously said, that I felt certain nothing would succeed except the sweeping away of the whole of the present law with regard to Native lands, and the devising of something worthy of a civilised