

some rich land, some poor land—that they will not use for themselves. Now, the Europeans are beginning to clamour for taxation to be levied upon the Maori lands—not on the lands that the Maoris themselves use, but on the lands that are kept idle. We must therefore find some plan for the Maoris by which their surplus land shall be used, bringing in a revenue, and paying taxes as well. What the Commissioners think is that if the Maoris themselves join together and choose their own best men to work with the representatives of the Government, they taking the oversight, they may be able to do something. The moneys arising from the rentals of these lands would have to be distributed by the Committee and the Government officer among all the people interested. The Maoris would have to determine themselves the list of the owners, what proportion each family or each individual would share, how much one hapu should get, how much another, and how much another. They would talk about these divisions among themselves first, and then fix it with the Government officer afterwards. If there were a serious difficulty between different hapus or different individuals, then they would have to ask the Court to fix the proportion for each hapu and individual. Now, if that were done all the Europeans would know then that if they leased a piece of land the lease would be perfectly good, because it was done in public by the whole of the people. At present, when interpreters and agents go about to each individual it leaves the door open to all sorts of quarrelling afterwards. And there are children and married women interested in every block; that makes another difficulty. If the Committee and the Government officer made the leases there would be no expense for the deeds. And though the expenses of the surveys would have to be met, they would not be subdivisive surveys for each individual; they would be the surveys for cutting the block up into farms. There would be less expense, therefore, than there is now, there would be better rents than there are now, and there would be certainty of title; and the Maori owners would have not only their reserves, but they would also have a certainty of revenue arising to them and to their children out of the lands. Now, that is what we want the Maoris to consider; and we propose now to ask some of the leading chiefs, and the most intelligent and thoughtful, who have considered these matters, certain questions, which will be taken down, along with their answers, so that we may see the working of their minds, and that they may explain to the others here. If they would like to make statements, we will take them down and use them as their evidence.

*Tureiti te Heuheu*: I shall not commence my statement with any preliminary remarks, but go straight to work, so as to shorten the proceedings. I shall first of all speak with reference to what the Commissioners have said concerning the Committee. Their suggestion as to that is very clear to my mind, and I approve of it in the sense that it would be better if it were a tribal Committee, not merely small hapu Committees. For instance, there should be a Committee, say, for the Ngatituwaretoa, a Committee for the Ngatiraukawa, and a Committee for the Ngatinaniapoto. The Committees, of course, would manage all matters connected with the land belonging to the tribe, and other matters affecting the Maoris. But the Committee, to be effective, would require the support of the Government. I am quite sure that it is very clear to the Maori race to have Committees of their own to manage matters in connection with their lands, but with regard to such matters as the Committee could not settle or decide they should have the opportunity of referring these to the Native Land Court, or to any other tribunal that the Government might appoint. As for the Commissioner who has been spoken about, I myself regard him with a certain amount of suspicion. My fears are in the direction of costs, meaning thereby that perhaps the Natives would be saddled with more expense on that account than they could control or reckon for. That is why I think it would be better for the Committee to entirely manage matters, and only to refer those things to the law which they were unable themselves to settle. There is another matter that I would like to refer to, which weighs heavily on the Natives under the present laws. It is a matter in connection with the Commissioners. We take, for instance, a block of land with a hundred owners in it. For the sake of argument we will say that this block has been subdivided, and that perhaps each man's share would come to, say, two acres. Perhaps the cost of subdivision very nearly exhausts the value of each share. In the case of such blocks I would be in favour of leaving them entirely to the Maoris to manage. If the Commissioner were joined with them it would mean the saddling of them with additional expense, and, consequently, with a certain amount of trouble. I think that the Natives could quite well enough manage a matter of that sort themselves. I am quite sure that the Native Committee, composed of able men, would never have any difficulty in arriving at the proportionate shares in the block. And I am quite sure that that way of doing the thing would be very much more beneficial to the Maoris. I will now refer to the question of surveys, for there are some surveys in the Taupo district, for instance, through which the Natives there have suffered a good deal; and this remark applies also to other parts of the Island besides Taupo. These difficulties arise mainly from the fact of the Crown being the only purchaser within the district referred to. Owing to that restriction on purchase which the Crown has imposed, the Natives are deprived of any other means of saving money to pay for the incidental expenses of land-dealings. There is no doubt that the system of the Government keeping up the fees to pay for the surveys has been the cause of a great deal of hardship to the Natives. If the land is not very good land there is nothing to stop the Government from fixing the price at any sum they like—say 1s. or 1s. 6d. an acre. That, of course, comes about through the market being restricted to only one purchaser, and that one the Government themselves. No matter how hard the Natives fight for a larger price, they are unable to alter the Government's intention. But, on the other hand, if the public market were open to the Natives there is no doubt that they would obtain competitive prices for their land, and thus would very often get more than the Government chose to offer. If the market were open to them in that way I am quite sure the Maoris would not suffer as they do at present, but would obtain a better price, and therefore less land would go to pay for the survey. Now, there are some blocks in Taupouniatia West that were surveyed in 1886. Do you want the subdivision?

*Mr. Rees*: No; only the facts.