Native Land Court; and, secondly, future dealing with their land. If any of them would desire to speak, all that they say will be taken down, and then the Commissioners most likely, after they finish, will ask questions upon the points which we want knowledge upon, and upon which we consider they have not fully spoken.

Wi Katene: The Native Land Court is the first subject to be spoken of. I will speak of the evils that I have seen at the Native Land Court. There are a great number of rules and regulations for that Court. A case may happen in this way: Supposing I have a case before the Court, the law of the Court is that for each day that I stand up and give evidence I have to pay £1. That is at the rate of £5 a week, the Court not sitting on Saturdays. That is the regular weekly cost, even though the case may have been going on for two months. It might be a case in which I appear merely as an objector, and not as an applicant, before the Court. The claimant in such a case has also to pay £5 a week. I have seen these things at the Court at Hokianga, both claimants and counter-claimants being called upon to pay the fees I have mentioned. Within the last couple of years there has been some alteration in respect of the Court. It is improved to some extent. Last year I only paid £1 for my case. That is a somewhat better arrangement. In former times, when the Native Land Court first began its work in this part of the country, Judge Maning was the Judge, and the Natives got on very well with him as Judge. Those are the evils that I have seen in the Native Land Court, together with the difficulties that arose in connection with the surveys. I believe that if our lands are dealt with in the manner I have stated—that is, subject to the great expense of the Native Land Court and the survey-charges, the land itself would not be able to repay the cost. I have seen a very great number of objections to the Native Land Court. One of the great difficulties that I have seen proceeds from the Chief Judge himself—that is, with regard to applications for rehearings. In former times the Government had the control of the Native Land Court. The Government acted in a uniform manner in the matter of rehearings; but when the power came to be transferred to the Chief Judge to grant rehearings, in some cases rehearings would be granted, and in others they would be refused. I have seen notifications in the *Gazette* of applications having been granted by the Chief Judge, and of other applications having been refused, and I have thought to myself, "What is the reason that in one case such an application is granted and in the other case that it is refused?" That is what I see in regard to the Native Land Court. Other speakers will have their remarks to make in connection with the Court. I have seen the errors of the Court in regard to a certain block in which I was concerned. This was a case of my own. I do not wish to speak of anybody else's case, but to speak of something that is absolutely within my own knowledge. That block of land consists of 7,000 acres. It is land situated at Hokianga, on one side of Waima. My case lasted for two months, and my claim was established, but only to a small portion of the water that was on the block. I got a decision, but I got no land. A small lagoon was awarded me as my interest, and my name was inserted as the owner in the certificate of title. I do not regard this as properly the law of the Native Land Court. That is one of the improper things I think the Court did, and there are many people who have a great number of complaints to make against the Court. When the case I have just referred to was being heard I watched the aspect of the Court. We who were the counter-claimants paid £1 a day for the case. Then the Court brought up a new regulation, which permitted counter-claimants to cross-examine for only fifteen minutes. If I went one minute over the fifteen, and thus occupied sixteen minutes, I would have to pay £1. And in that case the claimants or applicants were paying £5 a week. And it did not matter how falsely a claimant stated his case, he got judgment in his favour. I have just spoken of a case within my own knowledge, but there are many besides who are aware of these defects in the Land Court, and may speak of them. That is why I quite agree with the Commissioners in thinking there should be new regulations and new arrangements made with regard to the Native Land Court. One thing that I am very much distressed about is in connection with the Native Land Court, and that is in regard to surveys. The costs inflicted upon us for surveys, for Court fees, Crown grants, and other expenses are very severe indeed. I am convinced, and I say truthfully, that if these lands of ours were sold they would scarcely produce sufficient money to pay for the heavy outlay entailed in connection with investigating the title. This land of ours would not exceed 1,000 acres—that is, some of the blocks. The block which I spoke of, and in which I got a small portion of water as my share, was a very large block, but in many cases our blocks of land are 50- and 100-acre blocks. Other speakers may have something to say with regard to the Native Land Court. I shall now conclude what I have to say by repeating that new arrangements are essential in connection with the Native Land Court. I just wish further to impress upon the Commissioners the fact that the surveys are a great source of difficulty with us. The Chief Judge is another source of difficulty, and also the head surveyors.

Mr. Rees.] Do you believe that, if the question of tribal boundaries and hapu boundaries were left to be decided by the runangas and Committees of the Maoris themselves, better and truer decisions would be given than those given by the Native Land Court?—Yes; those things would be settled better in that manner than they would be by the Native Land Court.

Do you believe that, if persons came before the Native runanga or Committee to urge a claim to certain land, they would be more likely to speak the truth before the runanga than they would before the Native Land Court as at present constituted?—If a Native should go and give evidence before the Native Committee about his land, no false or lying statements would be manufactured, because he would know that the tribunal he was addressing was a Native tribunal, and he would not lay before it false or lying statements. But in the Native Land Court the lying is something fearful—it is very great indeed. The Court does not know whether the statements made before it are true or false. That is what I have seen, and that is why I think the Native Committee would be infinitely preferable to the Native Land Court.

What you would say, then, is that the runangas and Native Committees would know whether the man was speaking the truth or not, and that he would not dare, therefore, to tell them lies?—