

Yes, that the Committee or the runanga would know whether the man was speaking truly or falsely.

And the Native Land Court, as at present constituted, has not that knowledge?—Yes; that is it. In many cases the Native Land Court would believe to be true that which is false.

The Commissioners have been told that false statements are deliberately got up to deceive the Land Court, and that the people regularly learn off what they intend to say. Is that true?—Yes, that is perfectly true. False statements are deliberately made and urged before the Court.

Are you prepared to give an opinion as to the future management of Native land? Do you think that it should be managed henceforth as in the past, or that it should be managed by a Committee of the Natives acting with a Government officer before all the people, and for the benefit of all of them?—Yes, I am quite satisfied to express my views upon this second part of your inquiry. My idea is that it would be a good thing for the people who own the land to assemble in runanga and appoint a Committee to regulate and manage dealings in connection with the land. This is the new arrangement that the Commissioners are inquiring into, and if effect is given to it the Native Committees would be quite able to do all necessary things in the way of leasing land and those other works that have been spoken of. I am not quite clear as to the runangas and the Committee, but I think that the Committee itself would be able to do all that is necessary. There are no very large areas of land in this district to be leased by the Natives, but in the southern part of the Island there are large areas of land. My opinion is that if the principal Natives in the South—Wi Pere, Hamiora Mangakahia, and Paratene Ngata—make any suggestions the Commissioners should pay attention to them and carry them out, and that, so far as the Ngapuhi are concerned, the Commissioners should also carry out what we would suggest. But it is quite possible that some of our lands would be in the same position as some of those lands in the South. Then, in such cases let the arrangements that those persons approve of apply to such of our own lands here as fall within the same category.

Generally speaking, then, we understand you to approve of the management of their land by a Committee of the people, for the benefit of the people, with the consent of the people, and in the presence of the people?—Yes.

And that in the cases of the Southern tribes—the Ngatimahungunu, Arawa, Ngatimaniapoto, and Ngatituwharetoa—the principle of the Committee, with a Government Commissioner, to conduct all transactions in respect of their waste lands would be likely to be useful?—Yes.

[*Hone Peeti* at this stage continued the sworn testimony which he commenced before the Commission at Auckland on the 18th March. See “Minutes of Evidence.”]

*Hiramai*: I wish to speak to the Commissioners with regard to something that *Hone Peeti* has said concerning the maps that were not sent in in time to the Survey Office. I wish to know what reply the Commissioners have to make to that.

*Mr. Rees*: The only reply the Commissioners can make is, to ask the Government that it shall be inquired into, and if the Maoris have been wrongly treated that the wrongs be redressed. We can ask the Government to inquire into it, and whatever has been wrong we can ask the Government to set right.—That reply is quite satisfactory to me. I wish to speak of the cases in which surveys were made in the old times, but in which the maps were not approved of. That was at a time when the Maoris were having disputes among themselves, and some of them went to the Survey Office and got all the maps that they could, so that the other party of Natives would not have access to them. That is one of the reasons why the surveyors could not prepare their maps and send in the plans of some of the lands they had surveyed. Now, in these times, when application is made to the Court the Court says, These surveys are no good—that they are not certified to. That is the reason why I stand up here and say that the fault of the delay in regard to those maps is not the fault of the Court or the fault of the surveyors, but the fault of the Natives themselves. Another of the wrongs that are seen in connection with these maps is that pieces of land are cut off one block and cut off another block and claimed by the Government. That is why I say the Natives are to blame themselves on account of the maps not being passed in time, and my idea is that those surveys should be made anew. The two chiefs who have spoken are quite right in saying that this question of the surveys presses very heavily upon the Natives. Those two chiefs are quite right in what they have said in pointing out the great objection to the Native Land Court, and I quite agree with what they have said in supporting the Committee system. But some of the evil that has befallen the Maoris has resulted from the Maoris themselves. I think this Maori Committee system will be the salvation of the race, although many troubles have arisen from the Native Committees. The two chiefs to whom I have referred have explained their views upon that question, but I am not at present prepared to accept all they said. I have seen some of the trouble that still remains as the result of the work of the Native Committees. If opportunity be offered there are others who could come forward and point out the evils that have resulted from the Native Committees. In concluding what I have to say, my opinion is that the evils that have resulted from the Native Land Court would still continue even if there were Native Committees. What I have seen of these Committees is this: Supposing that two people are contending for a piece of land, and that one of them is a chief and the other a very low-born person, the whole of the case would be laid before the Committee, but the Committee would give its decision in favour of the chief. That is all I have to say. I wish prosperity and health to the Commissioners.

*Mr. Rees*: Of course the Commission is most anxious to hear all sides of the question. We want to hear the expression of every man's mind—whether he is for a particular way or against it; because we do not come pledged to any one path—we want to find out the best path. But you must remember that if things go on as they are now there is no hope. One-half of the land which the Natives once had in this country they have sold—more than a half, in fact. They still have ten or twelve millions of acres, so that an immense territory is left. Now, where has the price of all