

from the Native Land Court, and bad has come from the Native Land Court; and it would be the same with the Committees. I think, then, in this way trouble would continue, whether it is from the Committees or the Courts. That is all I have to say. Perhaps the Commissioners would wish to put some questions to me.

*Mr. Rees.*] What plan would you suggest for getting rid of the troubles? Have you any plan for enabling these things to be settled without trouble?—I think the Court would be better than the Committee for settling these troubles. I have seen the Natives begin to take up guns over their disputes that were before the Committee. I have not seen the Natives take up arms in connection with the Native Land Court. That is why I think the Native Land Court would be better than the Native Committee.

Is it not because the force of the Government is behind the Native Land Court that the Natives do not think of resisting its decrees?—Yes.

Supposing all the cases were brought before the Native Committee first of all, and that if the Native Committee's decisions were right they should be taken into the Court and registered; but that if disputed, and if the Natives could not come to an arrangement, that these cases should be taken to the Court, and the disputed points alone referred for its decision, do you think that would be satisfactory?—That would be better than anything. It would be very good indeed. As this particular block has been referred to, I should like to have it referred to the Court, because it has been a very serious dispute.

That would be one case in which the Native Committees would fail to give a satisfactory decision, and then the other tribunal should be resorted to?—Yes, that is the case.

Do you think, then, that in all instances—not merely among your hapu or subdivision of the Ngapuhi Tribe, but among all subdivisions of other great tribes—the land questions might first be left to the runangas and Committees to see if they could arrange, and then if there happened to be irreconcilable differences they should then go into the Court?—Yes. I would ask the Commissioners what would be done in cases where there was Native land not surveyed, and disputes arose in connection with it?

Just the same: the Natives would have to meet among themselves and fix their own boundaries. Supposing there were 100,000 acres of land in this district to be arranged for, the Native Committees and the runangas would meet and would see if they could decide upon the sub-tribal boundaries, then the hapu boundaries, and finally the family boundaries; and, if so, the surveyor would mark them off on his map as they were settled. The surveyor would fix on paper in the presence of the parties, and by their consent, such-and-such a hill, such-and-such a tree, such-and-such a creek, such-and-such a natural boundary, an old pa or a cultivation, by their names, and when all these had been agreed upon he would place them on a map and draw a line between the hapu boundaries. Then the land would be surveyed according to the instructions of the Natives themselves?—That would be a very good arrangement. I should like to ask the Commissioners this question: Who are the proper people to own the land, the people who have occupied and dwelt upon the land from the time of their ancestors down to the present time, or the people who have not occupied the land?

The Commissioners cannot answer that. That is a point of law upon which it would not be right for the Commissioners to pronounce even an opinion. We have been appointed by the Governor to inquire what grievances the Natives have. If you say that certain decisions are given by the Native Land Court which you think are not according to law, we can report upon that; but we cannot give advice as to what is right and what is wrong?—You are quite right. I should like to ask the Commissioners if I could send a petition to the Parliament saying that I object to this map being approved.

Certainly you can. You can send in a petition to Parliament—that is, one couched in proper language and which does not abuse people. You must disabuse your mind of the idea that the Commissioners will recommend that this plan or that that plan shall be given effect to. We are not to decide. We can only say that plans are brought forward, and that people allege, on one side, that they are correct, while on the other side people allege that they are not, and will Parliament inquire whether it is so or not?—That is quite right. This explanation of the Commissioners is very good. Would the Commissioners inform me of the name of any particular person in Parliament to whom I may send my petition?

Eparaima, your own member. A member of Parliament is bound to present a petition sent to him for that purpose. If he did not he would be turned out of Parliament. Every member is obliged to present such a petition. For instance, if a petition were sent to me against myself I would have to present it to Parliament?—The petition is to the Parliament, then?

Yes, it will be addressed to the Parliament of New Zealand. Then it will state what the facts are about the plans, and then pray that the Parliament will not pass that plan, but cause inquiry to be made?—I do not know what Eparaima will think of me, because I did not vote for him at the last election.

That does not matter. Eparaima is your member, and represents you?—If we should ask in our petition that an inquiry be held, would the inquiry be held by a Committee, and Wi Katene and Hone Peeti be asked to allow themselves to be appointed?

I cannot say. That would rest with Parliament to determine. Parliament would take such steps as it thought would insure justice being done?—I want to ask the Commissioners if it is their opinion that the Native Committees will be appointed to inquire into all these troubles.

The Commissioners cannot express an opinion upon that. They have got to report merely on the troubles they hear about. Parliament must deal with the remedy. Do you Maoris who are here think that the general opinion of the Maoris would be that, in the first instance, cases should go before the Native Committees, and then only in case of dispute go before the Court?

*Mr. Mackay.*] And that in case of agreement before the Committees, that that agreement should be recorded by the Court?—That is really a very excellent arrangement.