

That also is clear?—All of us are desirous of leasing, and that we ourselves should make the arrangements.

These, then, are the three strong points in what you have to say: the restriction to be removed, sales prohibited, and leases permitted. Now, if leases are permitted, how should they be conducted?—That would be settled by the chiefs of the land and the lessee.

Would you say that, if it were a block for which there was only one owner, that owner should be allowed to arrange with the lessee; and that if it were a block for which there were a hundred owners, the hundred owners should be allowed to arrange with the lessee as to terms?—In a case, say, where there would be a hundred owners, they would arrange matters between themselves first, and then go to the intending lessee. They would meet and act as a committee, fix among themselves the terms and the conditions of the lease, and then acquaint the intending lessee with the conclusion they had arrived at.

Then, when all those terms and conditions had been settled, one of your number would ratify the transaction?—Yes, we would choose one from among ourselves to carry the arrangement into effect.

When the one person was fixed upon to give effect to this lease, and the lease had been given effect to, when it came to a question of paying the rent, who would receive that rent?—When the time had come for the rent to be paid, the money would be paid to the person, or through the persons, chosen or arranged for by the owners of the land. They would appoint a person or persons to receive the rent. Then those persons who were to receive the money would place it down among the people, and it would be divided among the persons entitled to share in it.

Would that money be divided among the people in proportion to their interests in the block?—In some of the blocks the shares would be equal, and in others the shares would be unequal. The money would be divided in proportion to the interest held by the recipient. That is a matter the Natives could adjust among themselves.

Now, if a person were selected by the owners of the land to receive the rent, do you think he would be able to distribute it properly and fairly among the owners?—The owners of the land would be quite able to see if anything improper was done by the person distributing the rent, and, in case he were doing wrong, he could be summoned and brought before the Court.

*Mr. Rees.*] Do you not think it would be wise that, along with the persons chosen by the Natives for this purpose, there should be a Government officer appointed to see that the money was fairly distributed in that way among the people? Would that not be for the good of the Maoris?—A receiver of the rent such as I mean would be one who would not have anything more to do with the land than the receiving of the rent. He would simply receive the rent and divide it.

Do you not think there should be an officer of the Government for the district to see that the Maori so receiving it dealt it out fairly, and gave him assistance in doing that?—The way I would like would be that the one person, or the three or four persons, who might receive the rent should get it and distribute it themselves.

Parliament is responsible to the Natives, and would be able to help them by giving them skilled assistance in seeing that that money was fairly distributed. It is not for the Government's benefit, but for the Natives' own benefit, that this is suggested and would be done?—No, we do not care about having a Government officer. That will be a question for the Government to settle.

We should like to hear what you have to say about the power of the Natives to make those reserves for cultivations, because it may happen that there will be men among them able to cultivate or to manage sheep-farms. What is to be done in such cases? Will the people among themselves decide what is to be done about reserves—for that is a very important question?—We ourselves would make the necessary arrangements for lands of that description—that is to say, the owners of the land would make the arrangements.

Would you set apart any portion of the blocks for the education of the children, and, in the same way, decide what portions should be so set apart?—We have two schools already. This is the arrangement we have with regard to schools: Supposing I have a block of land, and if I should consent to the school, it should go upon my portion of the land. We would arrange among ourselves whether we wished the schools or not. I do not think it is necessary to pursue this matter any further. The great question is the removal of the restriction from our lands, and you can report to Parliament that that is our desire.

As to the statement which you have made, that the Natives do not desire to sell, but that they desire to lease their lands in the way which has been spoken of—the whole of the people leasing in public and the few carrying the lease into effect—we can report in favour of that, for that is a distinct statement to some purpose, because they say they will lease after making reserves. Of course, the Maoris would have to conform to the law as made by Parliament; but we will report the conversation that has been going on here, and the results of this discussion.

*Henry Edwards:* I hope the Commissioners will not be dark if I stand up and contest anything that has been said by the Commissioners. It is well that we should consider over these matters, so that our thoughts may be clear, lest the Commissioners should have the impression that we are opposing them. We, an ignorant people, are endeavouring to seek out the best course so that advantage and good may be derived. Therefore it was that we mentioned in the first instance that the restriction should be taken off our land, because there is no reason why that restriction should be on our land. It is restricted against everybody except the Government, and, as there is no reason why that restriction should exist, we ask that it may be removed. It is on account of our land being subject to that restriction that we have been unable to adopt any plan similar to that mentioned by the Commissioners. And we shall have to seek out the best system to act upon. That is the reason why we have been unable among ourselves to come to any definite conclusion. We were unable to determine what particular plan we should adopt. We are not fully clear to-day as to the course spoken of by the Commissioners, and that is why we say that, if the restriction is removed, then we can turn our attention to considering the best course to be adopted. It is not as if we were setting up a groundless opposition. With regard to the question