

What is your own opinion with regard to having Native Committees constituted? Do you think that the Native Committee would be able to carry out the work that is now being done by the Native Land Court?—With regard to that I would say this to the Commissioners: that the work which the Native Land Court has to perform is arduous, and if the present functions of the Native Land Court were imposed upon the Native Committee I do not think the Native Committee could carry out all the functions of the Native Land Court. The reason why I give that answer is this: The people who would be concerned in the Native Committee would be of the one tribe, and the different members of that tribe would be bound together by ties of relationship. There would also be family ties connecting together all the people in that particular district. The people bound together by these family ties and connections would be dealing with their own personal interests. In that way differences of opinion would arise—family matters would be introduced. That is why I doubt whether the Native Committee would be able to carry on the work of the Native Land Court.

You do not think that the Native Committee could do everything the Court does, but that it could do some portion of that work?—Yes.

What particular work of the Court do you think the Native Committee could do?—The Committee of the Heretaunga District should deal with the subdivisions of land in the District of Gisborne, and carry out the subdivisions, as well as undertake the duty of appointing successors in cases where such appointments are called for.

Do you think that the District Committees would be capable of ascertaining the boundaries between different hapus?—Yes. These are things that the Natives could do themselves, because they are conversant with their own ancestral boundaries.

Would you have original investigations of title to land made by the Committee?—The Committee could deal with Native land that is in its original state, and which at present is undealt-with—lands untrammelled by the existing laws.

What is your opinion with regard to leases and sales of land?—Do you mean with regard to disputed matters in relation to leases, or simply with regard to leasing where no disputes are involved?

Yes?—The Natives should have power to lease their own lands.

In a case where there would be a large number of owners in a block of land, would you allow the individuals to have the power to lease or sell their particular interests?—No, I would not agree to empowering individual transactions for leasing or selling.

Supposing, for instance, there were a hundred people in a particular block of land, and they wanted to deal with it, in what way would you suggest that effect should be given to their desire?—That would be a matter that should be left for the majority to determine.

Supposing there were a hundred people, including women and children, and that each one of these required individually to sign the lease?—Yes; every one of them should execute the lease before it should have effect.

Would not that be a costly proceeding both to the European and to the Native, and would it not absorb a considerable portion of the monetary value of the land?—I recognise that it would be a costly proceeding indeed, but it would be the proper way to carry out the transaction.

Would it not be a beneficial thing for the Natives if some simpler method of dealing could be devised with regard to leasing, so that the incidental expense would not be so great?—If some simpler and less expensive way could be devised it would undoubtedly be a very good thing.

Now, supposing that the hundred owners would nominate a Committee to carry out their ideas with regard to leasing, but that, instead of the members of the Committee receiving the rent that would accrue from the land, it should be distributed among the whole of the owners by some one appointed for the purpose?—That is the plan that was adopted by a former law. That scheme has been tried before—a few people acting on behalf of the greater number—and many tribes suffered in consequence, and it is difficult now to see a better course which would act satisfactorily. At any rate, the old system that you refer to empowered the few to receive the proceeds.

That was the cause of the trouble that arose then. Now, supposing that the few would not have the power of receiving the money, what would be your opinion as to some such system as that?—I am not prepared to answer right off. I should like very much to be able to answer, but I cannot do it off-hand.

How would it do if, along with the Committee, a Government officer were appointed to see to the proper distribution of the funds?—That is the idea that I have entertained—that a Government officer should be appointed to see that the thing was properly carried out. There is a variety of standpoints from which that question could be viewed. I hope the Commissioners will not be displeased if I am not ready with my answers. Now, in regard to the West Coast reserves, they are administered by an officer of the Government, and yet we hear of complaints being made by these people to Parliament, and they object to such laws being made in respect of their lands.

That is correct. These lands are under a special Act, and they are managed by the Public Trustee.—I do not know in what particular manner the Government officer would act. The Natives would always feel suspicious about the carrying-out of the affair if any Government officer were to be associated with it.

Supposing the Native Land Court Judge of the district were appointed instead—that it would be for the Native Land Court Judge of the district to see into the matter, the colony being divided into Native districts, and a Judge appointed to each of them, each Judge acting within his own boundary. Supposing, then, that this Judge would supervise the payment and distribution of the money, so that no trouble and difficulty should arise in connection with it. What would be your opinion as to that?—I should like to reserve those questions that I am unable to answer off-hand, so that I may consider them. I would be glad if the Commission would favour me with a memorandum of the particular points that I am not now able to make any definite statement of opinion