

upon. These are very important matters, and it would be well, therefore, if they were reduced to writing, so that the people could consider them more leisurely.

Supposing that the people would carefully consider some plan for leasing their land; that they would then regulate the amount of money for which they would lease their land, and the term for which it would be leased; and that they would then arrange among themselves what portion of the land should be excluded from operation; and if they could not arrange between themselves as to their respective interests, that the Court should then declare what those interests were without having a survey made of the individual interests. Then, when all this would have been done, the Committee which would be appointed would ratify and validate the transaction. Then, say that the money accruing from it would be paid to the Court of the district, and that the Court should then pay to each of the owners his proportionate share of the rent, based on his relative interest in the block. What, then, would be your opinion of some such scheme as that; because the Commissioners are seeking information on this point?—These are the things that I refer to when I say that I am not in a position to deal with them now. I would like to have them written down first.

If it is your desire to consider these matters, well and good; so that you may make what suggestions you think desirable. I have another question to put to you. What is your opinion as to this particular practice in connection with the Native Land Court? Supposing we had the colony divided into Native districts—say, for instance, one for Hawke's Bay, one for the Wairarapa, another for Gisborne—and for each district to have a permanent local Judge, who would have his office there, and carry on the whole of the business there?—What about rehearing cases?

I shall come to that presently. Would the course that I have suggested be a better one than the system which prevails at present?—I want that included with the other questions that I have asked to be written down and sent to me.

Now, with reference to rehearing-Courts, how do you think this plan would suit: That the Chief Judge should not be told off for any particular district, but that he and the Judge of any particular district would in conjunction attend to any rehearsings within its bounds? First of all, your opinion is that it would be a good thing to have the Committees acting along with the District Judges?—I would like time to consider.

Perhaps the best thing to do would be to leave these matters over for your consideration, and you could let the Commissioners know the result early to-morrow?—I just want to know if the others consent to that arrangement.

*Mr. Rees*: Before the Natives make up their minds to go away let them ask any questions they please. Hamiora may have a clear understanding, but others may not, as to the questions submitted to them. Let them all understand clearly the questions they have to decide.

[The same evening Hamiora Mangakahia was furnished with a memorandum setting forth the questions that he desired time to consider.]

*Hiraka Ti Rongo*: I come from Patea. Perhaps I had better begin what I have to say by referring to the Native Land Court. Myself and hapu are people who have suffered grievously through the operation of the Native Land Court. The way in which we have been afflicted by it is through having to repair to distant places in order to attend the sittings of the Court. Another grievance under which we labour is having our cases gazetted for hearing and called on, say, at Napier, and then, on our attending there, finding that our cases had been adjourned without being proceeded with at all. Yet another grievance under which myself and hapu labour is what has already been referred to with respect to the employment of agents in the Court. A further grievance of which we have to complain relates to the Assessors and interpreters, and likewise to the Judges. The fault that we find with the Judges, the Assessors, and the interpreters is that they have feelings of partisanship with one side or the other before the Court. In fact, they take sides. The interpreters in the Court will not correctly interpret all the evidence, but it will be misinterpreted to the Court. I object to them also on the ground of their incompetency. But the source of all these troubles is the Native Land Court itself. During the year that has just passed there was a block of land called Awarua, belonging to myself and hapu, under adjudication by the Native Land Court at Marton. We, the hapus who owned that land, applied and endeavoured to obtain permission to settle the inter-hapu boundaries among ourselves. The Court consented to our going outside the Court and settling this business among ourselves. Three hapus satisfactorily arranged the boundaries between themselves, but the other two hapus, which did not join in the agreement, asked the Court to deal with the subdivision. It went before the Court, and in consequence of the Court's investigation the contention of one of the objecting hapus fell to the ground. Then, if that dissentient hapu had listened to what the others had arranged, there would not have been the expense of fighting the matter before the Court. The case of the other dissentient hapu was then proceeded with, and the case of this particular hapu was before the Court for eight months. If the Court, however, had listened to the suggestion thrown out by the Native Committee—and that was to confine the investigation to such portion of the block as was in dispute—the entire hearing could have been shortened considerably. But the investigation was extended to the whole block, and hence it was that it occupied such a long time. In fact, it is not over yet, and the Court has adjourned.

*Mr. Carroll*.] Is it ever going to end?—I do not know. I do not believe it will end in the time of this generation.

Do you know any way that could be adopted to meet cases in respect of which one of the hapus did not agree with the arrangement proposed by the others?—I think that a Committee should be appointed from the tribe that owned the land, to deal with the matter.

But who would say what the tribe was that owned the land?—The tribe that would be lodging the claim to the land should select the Committee. The claim should be made known before the Court, and the objectors to it.

Supposing the Committee were selected on the principle of one member being chosen from each