

hapu, how would that work?—I am afraid it would work evil, in the same way that the Native Land Court does.

*Mr. Rees.*] Supposing a joint Committee had been chosen from all the hapus claiming in respect of the Awarua Block, how long do you think they would have taken to settle this disputed case?—I think they would have settled it in two months.

How many agents, conductors of cases, and solicitors have been appearing in the Awarua case?—There were five hapus interested, and there were therefore five conductors or agents.

*Mr. Carroll.*] From your observation, would you say that a lot of irrelevant evidence is given now in the Native Land Court?—Yes, there is a great deal of unnecessary evidence given—matters altogether outside the investigation are imported into it.

*Mr. Rees.*] Is there such evidence given before the Native Land Court as would not be given before the runanga?—Yes; a lot of new matter is introduced that would not be mentioned before the runanga.

The Commissioners have heard in several places that there is a custom growing up among some of the Natives of making up claims to land, not giving truthful evidence. Have you heard anything at all of that sort of thing?—I have heard of an instance in which that has been done, and the name given for the hapu making the imaginary claim was “Ngatitekakore” (the men without rights). I refer to the Rangikopani Block. This was the nickname given to these bogus claimants. When the Court came to subdivide the block it found that these people had no rights whatever in respect of it, and that they had simply made application for themselves, and for no hapu at all; hence the nickname.

How many owners are there in the Awarua Block?—Four hundred and forty.

Any children amongst them?—Yes, children, and grandchildren as well.

Do you think it would be possible to get the signatures of these little children to deeds, in order to complete transactions for selling or leasing the land, or in respect of any other transaction concerning it?—Their trustees might be applied to to carry out these things, once they had power.

Do you think it would take some time to get the 440 signatures?—I could not tell. I think, as far as my hapu is concerned, if they consent—I think it could be done in three weeks.

Supposing they wanted to cut the block up into farms, and that there were to be a hundred of such farms, do you think it would be possible to get a hundred deeds signed by these people, in order to lease the farms to Europeans?—My great desire is that that should be done.

No doubt. The Commission is with you there. We want to find out a method of accomplishing it, so that the transaction would not cost you any money—either you, the European, or the Government—and so that it could be carried out easily. Now, do you think that in respect of the Awarua Block the joint Committee could fix upon the different interests of the hapus, families, and then of the individual, in regular runangas?—Yes; we could do it very quickly.

In doing this could not the people themselves settle what reserves they wanted out of the block for cultivations, burying-grounds, and any other purpose for which they required reserves?—Yes.

Then, could the Committee, along with the District Judge—Judge Ward, for instance, or any man of independence and integrity, appointed for the purpose—arrange to have the land cut up into farms, and leased?—I think they could do it.

Then, supposing that, instead of 440 people signing the deeds, only two or three of the Committee, and the Judge, had to sign when the runanga of the whole people had decided how the land was to be cut up, would not that be a simple method of dealing with the land?—Yes; that is what I should like.

Then, supposing the agreement was that the money was to be paid by all these hundred farmers who took up the farms, to the Judge, and that the Committee had to distribute it among all the people, in accordance with the interests they had decided upon themselves, how would that do?—That is also my idea of what should be done. I wish to explain with regard to a certain block of land that I have got which is not yet subdivided. There are 134 of us owners in the Owahaoka Block. Seven of us were appointed a Committee in respect of it, three to be a quorum; and the people who appointed that committee were the 134 owners: but, because there was no legal authority or means of empowering this Committee to act for the whole number, as was intended they should act, we had to get a deed prepared and signed, at great expense to the people, and after that our work was carried out in a satisfactory manner through the Committee.

Do you think that if, in addition to the appointment of the Committees, there was a law to regulate the Committees so that there should be no need for a deed, it would be cheaper and better?—That is that I think—that something should be done to give proper power to these Committees.

Now, supposing that, in addition to the Committee, the resident Judge of the district had the power of seeing that the Committee distributed all the moneys properly, would not that give the people still greater confidence?—Yes; the Judge to exercise supervision.

Do you think such a plan as that would suit the Natives in your part of the country?—I think it would be a very good arrangement; and my hapu and tribe would consent to it, because we have been carrying out this principle ourselves for a long time, and yet we had not the power of the law to assist us.

Do you think that in certain places men of understanding would like the law so made that they could have farms cut out for themselves?—I think that the separate families might have the right of getting their family interests cut off—that is, that each family would have its own portion cut out.

Do you think that the law I have indicated should be made compulsory—that a certain time should be allowed the Natives, and if they did not come to an agreement it should take effect?—I think it would be a very good law to have made.