

should be reserves of not less than 200 acres, making them absolutely inalienable, and a Maori and a European being appointed Commissioners. If these safeguards are not imposed, who can tell at what time the Natives may not be "loafing" about the country as beggars. Pass, therefore, a law for the preservation of these Natives, so that they may not be allowed to altogether denude themselves of their lands. Now, with regard to land-selling. I do not think that the land should be restricted in such a way that the Government should be the sole purchaser. Let also the present restriction upon the Rohe Potae, in the King-country, be removed. I ask that that restriction may be removed at once, including the land down to the Awarua Block, in the Rangitikei district, because you are fully aware of the dishonest actions of the Government in having a restriction placed over that land. The object of that restriction is that the Government alone may purchase it, at 1s. 6d. or 2s. an acre. I say that that is an unjust thing. Many avenues would be opened up to the Natives of doing well for themselves if they were allowed to sell or lease portions of such lands; but they are denied all such opportunities while the market is kept closed against them. That is why I ask that the restriction may be removed from that land. I shall now speak with regard to the Courts that are sitting at the present time. I think that the Native Land Courts should be done away with, and that Native Committees should be appointed for the various districts; and that the Committees should have powers conferred on them by law. Then, when once they were fully empowered, they would be able to do their work at small cost. The Committee would be able to charge expenses for the day it travelled, instead of having a Judge charging travelling-expenses right through, besides getting his salary of £600 a year; and if there are ten Judges they all get their £600 a year at present, exclusive of the money paid to them on account of their travelling. I believe that the amount paid to the Judges, and the incidental expenses of the department, amount to something like £40,000 a year. If the Government are afraid about the cost, I think that they should allow the Committees to have the control during the present year; and then, when the Committees had arrived at their decisions, they could be sent to the Judge of the district, or to the Chief Judge, in order to be confirmed. I think that this would be a cheap method of doing the business at present done by the Court. Under the existing system the expenses for surveys, Court fees, and other incidental charges are very heavy indeed. I desire that a Commission should be appointed to inquire into and settle all past grievances, such as those Kipa and others referred to; and, with regard to confiscated land, I think the Government should relinquish its claim over it. Let the Government give to the people what they promised. There was no such word in the Treaty of Waitangi as that the people were to be killed and their lands taken possession of. No such statement as that was included in the Treaty of Waitangi, but, on the contrary, the Queen guaranteed her protection to the Maori race. In these days, however, there is a different law for each race. If the confiscated land is to be returned, return it unrestricted. With regard to rates upon Native land, I desire that these rates should be done away with. But let the rates fall upon the lands leased by the Europeans; but upon lands held by Natives—neglected and unproductive, and which the Natives are unable to improve—do not let rates be levied. Perhaps some old man will own a piece of land with bush upon it, but does not know how to work it, and perhaps year after year the rates will go on accumulating upon it until the accumulated arrears of rates amount to more than the value of the land. I say, then, that that is a law which confiscates the land, and takes it away from the people—from the old men, the women, and the children. Nor should rates be levied upon lands in their *papatipu* state, but lands that are leased by Natives to Europeans, or which are being utilised by the Natives themselves, should bear their share of the rates. There is a great amount of money paid by the Natives to the Government, which is really abstracted from the Natives in various ways. In connection with the making of roads, for instance, 5 per cent. of land is deducted from a block for that purpose without compensation being given. This is one instance of what I mean. If I lease my land to a European there is £10 per cent. deducted from the proceeds; but if you, the Europeans, lease your land only 15s. per cent. is taken. And if you sell land to one another that is the amount of duty that is chargeable. What is the reason, then, that I should have to pay at the rate of £10 per cent., when you have only to pay at the rate of 15s. per cent.? We have asked in the House of Representatives that the stamp duty should be abolished. If a lease is arranged for twenty-one years, why should the Government demand in a lump sum the duty payable for the whole of the twenty-one years? Let me say that the reason why that is done is to depreciate the value of the Native land, so that the Europeans proposing to lease these lands may be frightened from doing so. I now ask you to have that law abolished. These are all matters of very great importance, and ought to be included in your report. With respect to all the Native petitions which have been heard by the parliamentary Committees, and which they have reported to the Government for their consideration, I have no hesitation in saying that those reports have been a delusion and a snare, for nothing has come out of them. I suggest, therefore, to this Commission that some other steps be taken to give effect to the prayers of the Native petitions. I wish now to speak on the subject of the schools. I trust you will report with regard to all the Native-school endowments, and that you will state in respect of the school endowment of 600 acres at Otaki that that land was set apart as a school endowment upon the express condition that it would be utilised for school purposes, and that if this condition was not observed the land was to be returned. The same remark applies to the school endowment at Porirua—the Whitireia Block. There is now no school upon that land. The only children to be found upon that land are sheep. All the Natives wish the matter to be inquired into, in order to ascertain whether it is right or wrong that things should be allowed to exist as they are at present. That is all that I have to say.

*Mr. Rees:* First of all, I should like to explain that the 10-per-cent. duty is not put on the land in order to depreciate its value, but that it is put on because of the great cost of the Native Land Court and of the Native Department. The Maoris are so fond of the Native Land Court,