the land and examine the landmarks before giving judgment. If this were done in all cases there would be fewer applications for rehearing. I will give an instance where the neglect of this important proceeding led to the Court making an unjust and absurd mistake in the partition of a block of land in this district. When the Hereheretau subdivision case was being tried by the Court under Judge Wilson, the Natives interested made a strong effort to obtain the portion containing the homestead of Mr. J. Hunter Brown, the lessee of the block, and purchaser of several undivided interests therein. Whereupon Judge Wilson told the Natives that he would no more think of giving them the European's homestead than he would of giving the European their (the Natives') settlement. Yet, in spite of this assurance, the Court, in making the partition of the block —having failed to personally inspect the land—actually awarded to Mr. J. Hunter Brown the portion of the block containing the chief Native settlement (Te Whakake), the church, and burial-ground. This extraordinary decision led to a rehearing, when the judgment was, of course, reversed.

The Court should exercise more care in the revision of lists of names of owners, admitting only the heads and senior members of families, and representatives of separate interests, instead of allowing the Natives—as has frequently been done—to put in parents, children, and grandchildren, and even, in some well-authenticated cases, the names of children before they were born. It is owing to this laxity on the part of the Native Land Court that the memorials of ownership of lands on this Coast are burdened with hundreds of names, thus rendering it extremely difficult and expensive to deal with those lands, and well-nigh impossible to obtain a complete title.

I am of opinion that the chief or most competent owners of lands being adjudicated upon should manage the cases on behalf of their respective hapus, and that no lawyers or Native agents should be admitted to practice in the Native Land Courts, as these latter greatly increase the expense of the proceedings, and cause them to be unnecessarily protracted, the expenses in some cases amounting to nearly the value of the land. I consider that the expense of putting lands through the Court should be greatly reduced, and that no Native should be debarred from giving evidence or preferring his claim through inability to pay the Court fees. It would be preferable, I believe, if the necessary expenses were made a lien on the land, as the Natives are frequently impoverished and put to great straits in order to obtain money wherewith to pay Court fees and other expenses, and costs of living in the towns in which the sittings of the Court are usually held.

Adequate means should also be taken by the Court Registrars to send notices to all tribes interested in lands gazetted for hearing. While I was at Ruatahunu and Maungapohatu last December, the Uriwera complained greatly of not receiving any notice of the rehearing of the Te Wera Block, in consequence of which they were absent when the case came before the Court, and, there being no one present to represent their interests, the former judgment was confirmed, to their injury. I believe that in many cases a small and well-selected Native Committee might be of great service in the preliminary stages of an inquiry into the ownership or partition of lands, by taking in hand the classification and reduction of claims, collection of evidence, and so forth; thus placing the case in the best position for hearing, and greatly lessening the work of the Court, which would then only require to deal with the clearly-defined and conflicting claims, and the larger issues involved.

*Purchase and Lease of Native Lands.*—The great number of owners, and the difficulty and expense of obtaining their signatures to deeds of lease or conveyance under the existing Native-land laws of the colony, have practically produced a deadlock in Native-land transactions, and it is the almost unanimous desire of both Europeans and Natives interested that the present cumbrous and inefficient system should be abolished, and a more simple, inexpensive, and effective method of dealing with Native lands substituted. I believe there is a general desire, even amongst the Natives themselves, that in cases where there are many owners it would be better to revert to the system in force under the Act of 1867, whereby a certain number were appointed to act as trustees on behalf of the whole of the owners, with full power to sell or lease the lands in respect of which they were appointed trustees. The great objection to this system was that the trustees abused their power, by misappropriating to their own use moneys accruing from sales and leases, which they should have distributed equitably amongst the whole of the owners. But such an abuse of trust could be easily guarded against by the appointment of an officer whose duty it would be to see that all such moneys were divided amongst the owners entitled to receive the same. Such trustees to act only at the request of a majority of, say, two-thirds of the owners, and provision to be reserved for cutting out the interests of the dissentient minority. I believe, if some such method as the one proposed were adopted, that there would be comparatively little difficulty in effectuating the lease or transfer of Native lands, and a vast saving of time, trouble, and expense would be the result.

*Pre-emptive Right of Purchase.*—I believe it would be advisable, if practicable, for the Government to resume the pre-emptive right of purchase of Native lands in certain districts. This would lead to the lands being more speedily acquired by the Government, and at a more reasonable figure than under present circumstances, as private competition undoubtedly tends to raise the price of lands beyond their real value, and also induces the Natives to keep the lands locked up in the hope of obtaining still better prices at a future period; whereas, if there was no competition, the Government could purchase the land at their own price, as the Natives would know they had nothin to gain by holding out. I believe this plan would be most successful in districts where there are large areas of land still in the hands of the Natives.

*Attestation of Deeds and Instruments.*—I am of opinion that an officer with a competent knowledge of the Maori language should be appointed to act as Native Officer in each district, and Special Attesting Officer; also to act as Trust Commissioner: so that the necessary inquiries as to the *bona fides* of the transaction could be made at the time the transaction was effectuated, and the Trust Commissioner's certificate appended to the deed there and then. The same officer would also be responsible that the proceeds of sales and rents of lands were equitably divided amongst the owners as aforesaid. I consider that the officer carrying out the combined duties of Attesting Officer and Trust Commissioner should thoroughly understand the Maori language, so as to be able to certify