

234. *The Chairman.*] If he will come down the Committee will have no objection to hearing his evidence; but the Committee have ruled that they will not hear any one unless he brings his agreement?—Yes.

235. *Hon. Mr. Carroll.*] We have only taken individual cases and the Palmerston North agreements as sample contracts between the Natives and Europeans, as far as they bear on the proposals of the Government with regard to legislation. These agreements give us a type of the transactions which may enable us to pronounce upon their merits?—Just so. I should like to get an expression of opinion as to whether the Committee are satisfied that they have enough evidence now. It is a long way to bring a man down from the Rotorua district, and I do not think his agreement would vary much from our own.

236. *The Chairman.*] His place is on the way to Rotorua?—Yes; it is out of the King-country.

237. *Mr. Hone Heke.*] Where is the Estates Company's land?—In the Thames Valley. They have sold 2,000 acres to an adjoining sawmiller at £2 10s. an acre.

238. *Mr. Field.*] About how many feet would there be to the acre?—From 10,000 ft. to 15,000 ft.

239. *Hon. Mr. Carroll.*] Have you inspected the land yourself?—I have just been through that country and round about it.

240. *Mr. Fraser.*] Adjoining this property of your own are there any Crown lands?—Yes.

241. Has the timber being destroyed on this area, or milled?—No timber has been worked.

242. The timber is still standing?—Yes.

243. *The Chairman.*] The land is not occupied by Europeans?—No.

244. *Hon. Mr. Carroll.*] You applied, you say, to the Government for permission to contract for Crown lands?—Yes, with the Wellington Land Board.

245. And they refused?—Yes. They gave us an area of 100 acres, but they said they had been advised not to open the bush until the line was made. It was a question of policy.

246. They would not throw open those timber areas to private companies then?—No.

247. *Mr. Fraser.*] Is there any danger of fire in that country?—There is danger of fire in all totara forests. In the Crown forests we are working out two-thirds of it was destroyed by fire.

248. And you say the Land Board will not lease this property?—Yes. There is one matter I would like to mention to the Committee; it does not affect timber rights, but it is an important matter to a large number of people—that is, the continued restriction over the King-country. The Government have not been purchasing land there for years, and they still keep that land locked up. I think it is very unjust. We have been trying lately to form the district into a county, and our chief trouble is that there are large blocks of Maori land that do not pay rates, while in many blocks there are only one or two owners. We think it is a great injustice to us to keep the land locked up like this. It cannot be for the good of the country, because if it were opened it would be producing something, if it were only leased. When this second schedule in the 1894 Act was advocated nine years ago there was good reason for it, because the Government were purchasing land, but now it is quite different, and it is very unjust to keep the land locked up.

249. *Mr. Hone Heke.*] When did the Government stop buying?—About three years ago.

250. *Hon. Mr. Carroll.*] The Counties Act is not in force there?—No, not yet. The unoccupied Native land is the greatest difficulty we have had to fight.

251. *Mr. Harding.*] Is there any land in the hands of the Natives that the Government might acquire?—Yes; I think the Government could have acquired all this bush we are talking about.

252. *Mr. Hone Heke.*] Do you think it would be a good thing for the Natives and others if the Government were to cease purchasing their land?—Well, I have put some cases before the Maori Council, and the rentals they would get are almost as much as they would get from the Government for the freehold.

253. You think it has been a good thing that the Government ceased acquiring Native land in your district?—It should be a good thing.

254. *Mr. Fraser.*] When the Government ceased to buy the land it lay idle there?—Yes.

255. *Hon. Mr. Carroll.*] When did you apply for a county to be set up?—The measure was introduced last session—the Kawhia County. Practically all the Crown lands are settled there, or four-fifths of it; but we are restricted all round there as regards Native lands.

256. You know that there are large blocks there held by a large number of owners, and it is essentially in the interests of the Natives to have all their interests adjusted on some settled line of procedure before you deal with their alienation?—There is something to be said for the larger blocks.

257. Take the Rangitoto-Tuhua, how would you go about that?—When I suggested that you should take off the restriction you said that the owners would subdivide until they got them down to two owners, so that they could deal with the land.

258. Supposing there are five or six hundred owners, how would you go about acquiring the whole of their interests?—You would have to subdivide.

259. How long would that take?—It would take a long time; but there are several large blocks that could be very soon subdivided. If the country gets the lands settled in small areas by settlers, it will be of great benefit to all.

260. But there is also the question of the settlement of the Maoris themselves to consider: that is of equal importance to the European?—Yes, and I was much pleased to see that provision in this direction in the Bill.

261. And encouragement must be given to the Maori to follow farming pursuits, and so on—that is, to those who are deserving and capable?—Yes, that is so.