

*Henite Rau*: All right. Here are my papers, Mr. Chairman; I will leave them with the Committee

21. *Mr. Wi Pere*.] I want the Public Trustee not to be frightened at any of my questions, because all along he has been very frightened of me. I want to ask the Public Trustee whether he has leased the land which is the subject of the petitioner's petition?—No.

22. My second question is, Had the Public Trustee known, previous to the time of this petition, that certain of the Crown grantees were alleged to have been wrongfully put in?—Not in this particular reserve, but it is a general complaint that it is done in all reserves.

23. Did the petitioner never tell you previous to her petition that there were people in that Crown grant who should not have been put there?—She may have done so, but I wish you to understand that this is a general complaint.

24. You say that this is a general complaint in all Crown grants?—Yes. There are always two or three who will say that another Native has no right to be there at all. They say his grandfather was a slave or something of that sort.

25. Would you be willing that a Commission be set up to go through the list of names of these respective grants and sift out the wrongful owners?—That has nothing to do with me at all.

26. But you would be willing that it should be done?—I cannot be willing or unwilling.

27. But why do you say that? The Native Land Court could not do it until a law was passed empowering it to do so. I am asking you whether you would be willing that the Court should go there?—I would be unwilling from a social point of view, as it creates disturbance and as it is very dangerous to do so. I do not wish to say so in this particular case, but with white people or anybody else I would be opposed to a long-settled thing being disturbed. Witnesses are dead and absent, and there is a very great danger of injustice being done.

28. If people have been wrongly in possession of a thing for twenty or thirty years, is that any reason why they should not be disturbed now?—Yes.

*The Chairman*: What has all this to do with the petition?

*Mr. Wi Pere*: Why should they not be interfered with? We have been told that there are a number of wrongful owners in this block.

*Mr. Poynton*: That is only my opinion. Where you disturb rights that have been in existence a long time, and where documents have been destroyed and lost, and witnesses are dead, you are more likely to create more injustices than the injustice that you propose to remedy.

*Mr. Wi Pere*: But just arising out of what you have said. The land was seized, confiscated, and then the Crown set up a Commission to inquire and ascertain who were the proper owners of this place, and they did not come. The Government having fed certain people on biscuits before this, with a nice sweet flavour in their mouth, the Crown comes and puts these people in. The land was the property of the person in the first place. Now, you are the Maori and I have struck you upon the nose and your nose bleeds. You have some food in your hand and I say to you, "Friend, eat your food." You say, "Oh, I cannot, you have hurt me." Now, did you know that was the position in regard to the Commissioners in those days? The land belonged to the Maori, and they called upon the Maori to come and state what their rights were. Now, what Maori would go and tell what his rights were? He was weeping and the blood was running down from his nose. Therefore that was not the proper time to go into the question, but now is the proper time to go into the question. Things are peaceable now.

*The Chairman*: What has this to do with the Public Trustee? He cannot deal with this question.

*Mr. Wi Pere*: I have spoken to the Premier and the Chairman about this. Why does not the Premier bring in a Bill?

*The Chairman*: Have you any further questions to ask, Mr. Wi Pere?

*Mr. Wi Pere*: I am asking the Public Trustee if he is willing to agree that an inquiry should be held into the grievances put forward. I have not asked him whether he is willing to surrender his right. My questions were directed to him with a view to relieve the people of the grievances at which they cry out. You remember the first Public Trustee that we had; it was through what I did that he was overthrown and turned out, because his evil deeds were discovered by me.

*The Chairman*: What has that to do with the petition?

*Mr. Wi Pere*: I do not want the Public Trustee to be frightened in replying to my questions.

29. *Sir W. R. Russell*.] Mr. Poynton, you drew a contrast between the land leased to Mrs. Brown's tenant and the land occupied by the Natives. Do I understand that the land occupied by the Natives was under communistic tail?—No dealings whatever have been made by the office. The only dealing is Mrs. Brown's leasing.

30. It is held in common?—We should be pleased to give them occupation licenses, but they are Te-Whiti-ites and do not want this.

31. You are prepared to issue occupation license if they will take it?—Yes.

32. Do you find that Natives who have occupation licenses keep their farms in decent order?—Ever so much better. Some of them are starting dairy-farming, and they are doing very well.

33. Then, in the general interests of the Natives it would be desirable to place them upon that individual holding as soon as possible?—Yes. That is what we are anxious to do. If these Natives would say, "We want this divided," we should be very glad to do it. The gorse would be cleared away and the trouble would cease.

*Henite Rau (Mrs. Brown)*: My people want to be allowed to go on the land and to subdivide it themselves.