

40. *Mr. A. L. D. Fraser.*] Would you like to say anything to the Committee with regard to the manner in which moneys are distributed by the Public Trustee?—The Public Trustee sends round to one man in the grant supposed to be the head man. But that man does not go round and tell the Natives. The people are scattered all over the country. The result is that when the Native owners think it is time for the Public Trustee to pay rents, they are running after him, and a few come to meet him. But he does not run after them. The aged people, for instance, have to be taken to meet him at some place he appoints, and in most cases he is accompanied by some European, who lends money to the Natives and gets enormous interest—say, 5s. in the pound, for a week or a day.

41. You mean those who have orders upon the rents of the Natives?—Yes, the Reserves Agent generally pays out the money to the people owing sums to the money-lender. But those Natives who do not owe these people money have to run after him (the Agent) for their cheques.

42. You say that the representative of the Public Trustee does not trouble to call upon the aged people, and that there are certain people who advance money on the rents at enormous interest, and that the Public Trustee's representative when paying the rents has been accompanied by one of these people, and on occasions has paid the rent when that person was present?—Yes.

43. Is there anything else you would like to say?—I am bound by this lease not to let the land to a European. I have not the freedom of the European tenant. I can only let my land to Maoris if I do not want to work it myself. If I want to lease it I must let it to Maoris, and it is not likely Maoris will take up a lease when they have land of their own. So I have to keep that land and work it myself. If I do not the Public Trustee would go and let it to somebody else. It says so in the lease—

44. That the Public Trustee can let the land to a European?—Yes; but I cannot, although I am the owner. So I have to work it and make it pay these taxes, and rates, and improvements. I have to spend money from other sources, not under the Public Trustee's management, on this property, and it is very hard to think that the property is vested in him. It is very hard I cannot lease my land to Europeans. I know of other Natives who are doing so.

45. *Sir W. R. Russell.*] Which is the nearest town?—Hawera. It is two miles from Hawera.

46. And what is the letting-value—what could you get per acre?—Between 11s. and 12s. per acre is being paid for land in the neighbourhood, but my land has a good deal of bush on it, and there are only 6 acres ploughable.

47. *Mr. A. L. D. Fraser.*] You say other Natives are leasing their land to Europeans?—Yes.

48. Land that was set apart for occupation?—Yes.

49. And you cannot lease yours?—No, I cannot lease my own land.

50. *Hon. Mr. Carroll.*] With regard to this land you say the Maoris are leasing to Europeans—that land was set apart for their use and occupation?—Yes.

51. Do you know whether those leases have been confirmed by the Public Trustee?—I do not think so.

52. Do you think, under the circumstances, that such land as this that they will not occupy and which they lease out secretly and surreptitiously to Europeans should be leased by the Public Trustee to Europeans? Do you think that would be the best way of dealing with that land?—Well, I think the Natives ought to have the preference of any land they might want to cultivate and farm—

53. Yes, but these Natives, you say, instead of cultivating and using the land set apart for their use, go and lease it surreptitiously to the pakeha. That is what you complain of?—Yes, why should they be allowed to do a thing that I am not?

54. Then I ask you the question, do you think the proper use of that land would be for the Public Trustee to offer it publicly for lease?—Well, I think that Maoris should have the preference.

55. Then your idea is this, that the Public Trustee should offer the land publicly for lease, but should confine the accepting of these leases to Natives?—Yes.

56. Well, you say this land ought to be leased, but you make this condition, that the leases should be confined to Natives. Now, the complaint you made was that you could not lease your land to a European, but could only lease it to a Native?—That is so. That is all I can do in regard to it.

57. *The Chairman.*] I think, Mrs. Thompson, you said that this land you mention as being leased by the Natives was set apart for their occupation, and that they are leasing it contrary to the wishes of the Public Trustee?—Yes.

58. Do you think it would be better that the Public Trustee should lease this land for the Natives rather than that they should do it surreptitiously themselves?—Yes.

59. *Hon. Mr. Carroll.*] But you think a distinct preference in all such cases should be given to any Natives who desire to take up land by lease from the Public Trustee, whether they are already in possession of land or not?—Yes.

60. *Mr. A. L. D. Fraser.*] Have these Natives who leased this land to Europeans to pay rent for their occupation?—Yes.

61. And do they get a larger rent than they have to pay to the Public Trustee?—Yes, they get more.

62. Do you consider the Natives are doing better by their own action than if the whole of the management was in the hands of the Public Trustee?—They say they get more.

63. *Hon. Mr. Carroll.*] You say that Natives when they want money are often ready to raise it any how?—Yes.

64. And when they run short of money they go and make terms with Europeans for grazing-rights over the land, and that is the way they treat the land which is given them for use and cultivation?—Of course, I do not manage my land in that way.

65. But do you think these Natives are making the best use of this land by surreptitiously leasing it to Europeans in that way? Is that your experience?—Oh, the restrictions in the grant prevent them from parting with their land.