

47. That is in regard to the pieces of land you spoke of yesterday : were they pieces of land given by the Public Trustee under an occupation license ?—I have heard so ; but perhaps the Public Trustee will explain. They may be leases.

48. With regard to these occupation licenses, is it the intention of the Public Trustee that these licenses are for the purpose of giving the Natives land to enable them to cultivate food on it ? Is that correct ?—I cannot say whether that is so or not.

49. Well, there must be some reason why these occupation licenses are given. Do you think it is for the purpose of cultivating food ?—Yes.

50. Now, I want to ask you, Mrs. Thompson, what is your experience in regard to these Natives to whom the Public Trustee has given these occupation licenses. Do they cultivate the land given to them by the Public Trustee under this system, or do they lease these pieces of land ?—A large number use and cultivate the land, and, on the other hand, a good many lease the land to others.

51. They lease it privately to Europeans ?—Yes. Some of them are old people. They cannot work the land, so they lease it.

52. Then, do I understand you rightly in this : that the Public Trustee ought to allow and encourage Natives like yourself to lease these lands—that Natives like yourself should have the first privilege of leasing these lands ?—It is not right that the Public Trustee should lease those lands.

53. Then, you mean that those Natives who have got occupation licenses ought to have the privilege of leasing their holdings either to Natives or to Europeans ?—Yes ; they should get the best rent they can.

54. Do you not think that it would be to the best interests of such Natives, if they do not cultivate these holdings themselves, that the Public Trustee ought to have the power to take the land back again and lease it by public tender ?—That would be taking away their land.

55. Do you not think it would be better in cases where Natives have got an occupation license and do not cultivate their land—do you not think it would be better for the Public Trustee to take that land back again and lease it by public tender or by auction ?—They should get a maintenance off the land. They maintain that they get a living off this land, and they prefer that to handing the land back again to the Public Trustee to lease by public auction.

56. Yes, but what I want to know, Mrs. Thompson, from you is this : would it not be better, in your opinion, for the Public Trustee to take back these lands, if the Native does not cultivate them, and lease them for the Native by public tender or by auction ?—If that is to be measured by the way I have been treated by the Public Trustee, then I would say, no.

57. Well, let me put the question this way : Do you not think, with regard to these Natives who lease these lands privately to the pakeha—do you not think that if the Public Trustee was to take these lands back again, and put such leases up for public auction, that they would get more for their land ?—No ; I do not think so. I do not think they would get a larger amount than what they get privately. They say that they get better terms by managing it themselves. I would propose that the Maori should be given an absolute grant to his land, and then he would know which is his land, and do his best to improve that land ; whereas now he is uncertain whether he owns the land or not, and therefore he is discouraged.

58. *Mr. Wi Pere.*] I want to ask you as to the rental of the 72 acres. What ought you to receive for that land, without making any deductions ?—I do not know ; but I should say the proper rental for that land is from 14s. to 15s. an acre.

59. Well, then, what are you receiving now from the land ?—I think it is under 12s. an acre.

60. How much does the Public Trustee deduct each half-year ?—He deducts £8 2s. each half-year.

61. Then, who gets this £16 4s. yearly ?—The Public Trustee, I suppose.

62. Then, with regard to this land which is under the control of the Public Trustee, and on which there is a mortgage on the improvements, these improvements were mortgaged to the Public Trustee by the European for the sum of £384, and the revenue from the land was taken by the Public Trustee to pay interest on the mortgage ?—Yes ; I would like to point out, also, that I receive money from other sources outside altogether of these lands. I have bought lands of my own in other districts which I manage myself, and I do so successfully. I receive a good income from them.

63. *Mr. Vile.*] You hold a lease, Mrs. Thompson, similarly to Europeans ?—Yes.

64. I notice from your petition you are anxious to get the title, that is the fee-simple of the land. Is that so ?—Yes ; that is so.

65. You know, of course, that cannot be done without special legislation, the land being vested in the Public Trustee ?—Yes ; I am aware of that.

66. I notice in your petition that you say that the Europeans holding leases under the West Coast Settlement Act are agitating to get the freehold of these leases ?—Yes ; I desire that. I wish my lands handed over to me absolutely, and to manage them myself.

67. Then, why not join with these petitioners ? Why not join with them, seeing that you are in the same position as they are as far as this land is concerned ?

*Interpreter :* Mrs. Thompson asks what Natives are petitioning.

68. *Mr. Vile.*] Well, it is stated here in the petition that there is an agitation to get the freehold ?—Yes ; that is my position.

69. She says here that the Europeans are agitating to get the freehold of these lands ?—That is so. That is in regard to Europeans ; the present lessees want to get the freehold.

70. Well, what do you desire with regard to this ? Do you think it would be a good thing for the Natives or otherwise ?—No. I would not like the freehold passed to the Europeans. I would not like that.