

the Public Trustee's officer misled me. In regard to the money lent for improvements made by the European on our leased land, Mr. Fisher said that no deduction would be made from my money to pay for these improvements—that is, that I would not have to pay interest on the money that he allowed. But I paid taxes upon the European's mortgage (that is set forth in the statement of accounts), and this mortgage was for the benefit of the lessee, and I should not be charged anything on that account. The Public Trustee has said that I was the only person who persisted in claiming 14s. an acre for the land leased by Lysaght. I want to explain that. That lease to Mr. Lysaght was for the land in the Crown grant of 300 acres; but the part leased to Lysaght embraces the main block outside, belonging to the people generally. So that altogether he leases more than 800 acres, including 225 acres of our 300-acre block. If that is added to the land in the main block outside it makes over 800 acres. I said to the Trustee in regard to the 225-acre block that what should be done was this: that under that section of the Act which provides that this may be done, the 225-acre block, being only about a mile and a half distant from the Town of Hawera, should be cut up into small sections and put up to auction in the open market, in order that the best possible price might be obtained, as is provided for in the Act. There are only four of us who own the 225 acres, which form part of the land leased to Lysaght, and I was the spokeswoman on behalf of the four of us regarding this piece. Then the Public Trustee's agent said to me, "Let it be leased to Lysaght," because Lysaght was a man of means and there would be no trouble about collecting the money from him.

*Mr. Parata* : You mean in making this statement to deny what the Public Trustee has said ?

*Mrs. Thompson* : Yes.

*Mr. Parata* : Do you deny what he said ?

*Mrs. Thompson* : Yes, I do. He said, "Let this land be leased to Lysaght." Previous to this the Public Trustee's agent came to me. We had a conversation in my house and there discussed the advisability of cutting this block up into three farms, and we there agreed upon a system of partition. I did not hear how it was subsequently completed. The next thing I knew was that we were called upon to go and give effect to the lease to Lysaght. Then I found that the lease of the 800 acres had been divided into two, one part being given to Lysaght and the other part to Lysaght's wife, so as to comply with the 640-acres limit required by law. The Public Trustee agreed to that being done. I think I was right in persisting in claiming that the rent for the 225-acre block out of the 800-acre area leased should not be less than 14s. per acre, because this 225-acre block was by far the most valuable portion of the whole of the 800-acre area leased. As to the Natives whom the Public Trustee said agreed to accept 10s. an acre for the whole 800 acres, I wish to point out that those persons had no interest whatever in these 225 acres which form part of the 800 acres. They were on the other end of the leased land. The Trustee's agent reasoned with me and tried to persuade me to *aro*ha this pakeha because he was an old lessee. I said that the only *aro*ha I would show him would be that I would consent to take 13s. an acre. I was willing then, as I said, to accept 10s. an acre rent for the balance of the land in which I was interested, together with the people who agreed to accept the 10s. They were not interested in the 225 acres, to which only four of us have a right. If I had had the leasing of this 225 acres of land myself, I would have obtained a much better rent for it than this 10s. 1d. per acre. There were three pakehas ready to take up this land besides Lysaght, and the Agent shut them out. By doing this he shut out these three people who would otherwise have come in—that is to say, he leased the 800 acres, including the 225, to this one man, and therefore shut out other tenants who were willing to take up this 225 acres, in three pieces. If tenders had been called we would have had three tenants now on the 225 acres, who would be paying a larger rent than we are getting for the land. Several Europeans told me they were willing to pay 14s. an acre rent for this land. I have 72 acres out of the 225-acre block, and 40 acres in the 75-acre block, where I live. Those are actually my own acres, every one of them. I applied for a lease of the kainga I occupied. I am paying rent for this, not that I want to pay it, but they demanded it from me. It is my own land. Then I have 33 acres in the main block outside of this, which is owned by the people in common.

*Mr. Herries* : Is that part of the 225 acres ?

*Mrs. Thompson* : No; it is outside of that, it is part of the 800 acres. I wanted to have the whole of these lands grouped together, and to have the administration of my lands in Hapotiki, and all other lands. I have told the Committee already how I am troubled by the administration of the Public Trustee's Department in connection with these matters.

*Mr. Parata* : Are there any persons besides yourself interested in these blocks who desire to have their lands allocated ?

*Mrs. Thompson* : I am the only occupant of this place, but I have heard that other people also would like to have their interests allocated.

*Mr. Parata* : Do you believe that if that were done it would be more satisfactory to them ?

*Mrs. Thompson* : Yes; but then they should not be called upon to pay rent as I am. The Public Trustee said that he had in his possession the money which represented the value of the European's improvements, and that he paid us the interest upon that.

*Mr. Poynton* : No, I did not. There is no such money in my possession at all. No money passed at all. Mr. Lysaght gave a mortgage.

*Mrs. Thompson* : I understood that in his statement the Public Trustee said he had money in his possession which represented the improvements made by this European.

*Mr. Poynton* : No. I said quite clearly that no money passed. Mr. Lysaght paid no money, but executed the mortgage, as he was entitled to do.

*Mrs. Thompson* : Well, that was one of the arguments made use of by the Public Trustee or his representative in order to induce us to lease to Mr. Lysaght—that he was a man of means and that therefore it would be advisable to lease the land to him. I have not received any money since December from that lease, and Mr. Zachariah told me only the other week that this pakeha had not paid his rent