

7. Well, then, why do Mr. Pemberton and other settlers consistently complain of nothing being done?—I say that everything has been done that was promised; everything that was arranged with them has been carried out. If anything has been considered as neglected it has been at lessees' instance.

8. Why did the Waimarino County Council also make strong representations to the Government in connection with this particular road, which goes through Maori property?—That is Maori land. They were speaking of Maori land, not vested land.

9. But this is absolutely Maori land—this Ohotu land?—No, this is vested land.

10. Precisely, vested, and leased for a certain time?—There is quite a difference as to the positions—vested-land leases and Native leases.

11. But can you not see this: that it is Maori land that is leased, with right of renewal, and that it stands in an entirely different position from lands that may be held by the Crown and leased, with right of renewal—I mean, lands where the Crown assists?—It does so in this instance—that is, vested lands.

12. Well, then, the evidence of those people that we had here——?—Is entirely erroneous. My statement shows that it is erroneous altogether.

13. *Mr. Rhodes.*] Is there right of renewal after forty-two years?—The position is that at the end of forty-two years the Native owners have the right to pay the whole value of the improvements and resume possession of the land. Failing that, there is a continual right of renewal.

14. At stated periods of twenty-one years?—Yes; it is a perpetual right of renewal for terms of twenty-one years.

15. Is it a big block?—There are, I suppose, 70,000 or 80,000 acres in the four blocks.

16. *The Chairman.*] I want to pursue the question of the roading, because I know its seriousness as far as the Waimarino County Council and the settlers are concerned?—If you read the letter attached to my statement, dated 13th March, you will see that the Board offered the County Council £1,500 with which to go on with the roading of the block, and the county said they could not take any money until the loan was granted.

17. The Council are in this position: the amount allowed by the Maori Land Board for roading a block of 80,000 acres is so small as to be almost like putting a bucket of water into the sea?—Not at all. I have no hesitation in saying that the amount proposed will road that land satisfactorily to comply with original proposals.

18. With all the cuttings in the Parapara Road and other places?—I am not speaking of the Government roads. I am leaving the two Government roads—the main roads—out of the question.

19. In connection with those roads the Government refused?—The Government are continually spending money on those roads every year. They keep their own maintenance-men going. The Government have never refused any advances on those two roads—the Parapara and Fields Track Roads.

20. Take the past three years: except at the end of the Parapara Road from Wanagnui, there has been comparatively little work done. The Waimarino County Council did not care about tackling it, because they felt they would be undertaking a liability which they could not carry out?—I am satisfied that that position does not affect the Maori Land Board at all.

21. How much of these blocks, and Maori lands further in or near these blocks, is still to be thrown open?—Speaking as to vested lands, I think I may say that pretty well every acre that can be leased has been disposed of. To show what the value of this land is, take the Duigans' case: The Duigan family—three, I think—have taken up 3,750 acres in this block, and they are paying a rental of about 1s. 9d. an acre. That was assessed on the assumption that these people would probably have to borrow another 10s. an acre to complete the roading beyond what the Board were doing, and I say that was ample for that purpose. To show that the land is a good marketable commodity at the present time, I may say that the lowest priced realised at the last sale of this land in Ohotu, held two months ago, was 3s. an acre unimproved, and prices went up to as high as 4s. 2d. an acre.

22. Yes; because those who went in first have improved the land so much that naturally the other lands have acquired an increased value?—Indirectly they have been benefited in this way, I admit; still, the Board have done a fair thing towards roading at that end also.

23. You inform the Committee, then, that practically the whole of those Maori lands extending from Raetihi nearly down to portions of the Wanganui River are taken up?—I am speaking of lands that are vested in the Board—not ordinary Native land.

24. Practically, your answer to my question is that almost all the Maori lands vested in the Maori Land Board are taken up?—That is so.

25. Well, then, have you any knowledge of the quantity of Maori land still unoccupied that is not vested in the Board?—It is very hard to say, in a district like that. I could not give you the slightest idea.

26. Are there in that district 10,000 acres held by the Natives and not worked?—There would be fully that.

27. With regard to these people obtaining advances, you think there is no difficulty in that?—I do not see what is to prevent them.

28. Are you aware that the State-guaranteed Advances Department have frequently refused to advance money?—I know they have advanced money in a great number of cases.

29. *Hon. Mr. Ngata.*] In the Ohotu Block?—Yes, and Morikau, and other blocks.

30. *The Chairman.*] Will you give me one instance?—The State-guaranteed Advances people are best able to supply that. Applicants for advances at one time had to come before the Board for the Board to be a party to the mortgage, and I know several were approved.

31. Can you give this Committee one instance where the State Department have advanced to lessees in the Ohotu Block?—I believe Mr. Dodd has had an advance, also Mr. Peacock, as well as others.