

views I slightly disagree. If I understand him aright, he wishes that the Native Committees now constituted should deal internally with the Native title, to the exclusion of the Native Land Court. The Native Land Court is supposed to be an independent tribunal, that will decide fairly between the conflicting parties. It may be that sometimes the Native Land Court will make mistakes. I am not prepared to state that the Court is immaculate; but let me ask, Is the Native Committee immaculate? Might it not also make errors? Might it not be partial in its decisions, and fail to do justice? Might not the majority of the Committee be entirely on one side, and might not that majority favour the people of its own tribe to the injury of the people of the other tribes? I am not disparaging at the present time a Native Committee, but I am pointing out that no institution is altogether perfect. All require to be hedged in with sufficient safeguards. Now, with regard to the action of the Native Land Court in the country which has been taken under this Act, I would say this: It is not my desire to force the Native Land Court upon the people, but if the people ask for the Native Land Court why should it be refused? Then, only a short time since most of the important chiefs and people and landowners signed a petition that the Native Land Court might sit and adjudicate upon their title. I do not know whether they are still of the same mind, but, suppose they are of the same mind, why should they not have a Court? This is a matter entirely for themselves. Now, let me say one word with regard to the action of private persons in the Native Land Court. I have given instructions that when an application is made for a survey a copy should be sent to the Chairman of the Native Committee, as well as copies to the principal chiefs, so that all may know what is going on. I am now considering whether some legislation could not be had to prevent the abuses which have occurred through Natives who have very little claim to the land taking action to set the Court in motion. I agree very largely with the remarks of Mr. Ormsby upon this point, and I hope that next session we shall be able to take such measures as will prevent abuses from occurring again. Now, with regard to roads and railways, I suppose that the Natives are governed by the same feelings and the same views as the Europeans upon this point, namely, that nothing is more desirable than to have roads and railways through their land in order to give their land a value. They must know that there are large blocks of land in this country which have really no value at all, because there are no roads or railways through them, and if they had to sell this land at the present moment they would not receive more than three or four shillings an acre, whereas if railways or roads were made through it it would sell for as many pounds an acre. But I have learned from the speeches that were made to-day by the more responsible speakers that no one objects to roads and railways. What they do object to is that the land should be rated on account of these roads and railways. I object to this Rating Act as much as Mr. Ormsby or any other Native present. I think it is unfair to rate land that is not in the condition of being used. The Government have the power of proclaiming Native lands subject to the Rating Act, and of course they may abstain from proclaiming land under the Act. I do not think any of this land along the line of the railway, or along the roads leading up to the railway, should be proclaimed under the Act. When the land has been leased or sold, then the time will have come for putting on rates; and I infer that no Native will object to pay rates when the land has been leased and is being cultivated, for the rates are put on for the benefit of the roads, and roads cannot be made without them. It should be borne in mind that the money is not lost. It goes into the roads, and the roads give a value to the land. But, as I have said, that only applies in my opinion to land which has been sold, leased, or is in actual cultivation, and therefore there is no danger to be apprehended that the land referred to will be brought under the Rating Act. Now, with regard to the powers of Native Committees, I am inclined to believe that the Native Committees may render great service in administering the laws among the Native people. I desire, therefore, to encourage them in every possible way, and I propose next session to bring in an amending Bill to the Committees Act, giving to the Committees power to adjudicate on cases up to a certain amount among their own people. At the present time they have this power, but they can only use it when the parties agree to submit their case to the Committee. But what I propose is to give the Committee the same power as a Court. I think it is also desirable to give them some revenue, if they desire it, and I am considering the expediency of handing over to them the collection of the dog-tax, for instance. I think also that the Chairman should be paid a small sum for attending to the duties that may come upon the Committee. Then we propose to give them larger powers on preparing cases for the Native Land Court, so that all cases will come before the Native Committee in the first instance, and then go on to the Native Land Court, which will finally deal with the matter. With regard to vesting the title in *hapis*, instead of individuals, I have a few words to say. There are great abuses that have arisen from vesting the lands in a limited number of owners to the exclusion of others. In some cases those in whom the land has been vested as trustees have exercised the rights of owners, instead of trustees, and those not included in the grant have been wronged. I propose to bring all in. When the Land Court has found out the owners to a certain block of land, we propose that those owners should meet together and elect a Committee of, say, seven members, who should have the right of managing that particular block for the interest of all the owners. We propose that when they wish to lease their land for instance, that they should come to a Board consisting of three members, and that Board should put in motion the machinery, in order to have the land surveyed, cut up and leased. It is proposed that the Government should advance the money for the surveys, and that this money should be repaid out of the rents. Now, in order that this Board should be thoroughly represented, we propose that there should be one Commissioner appointed by the Government, the Chairman of the district Native Committee should be another member, and that another should be perhaps elected by the Natives themselves, but we have not yet decided how this third shall be appointed. Now, I agree that all large questions of legislation affecting the Native people should be circulated amongst them before being introduced. It is my intention to circulate the Bill amongst the Native Committees and amongst the principal chiefs and landowners of the Island. The Boards will have the power of conducting all sales of land and all leases, but they will have no power of