

121. We want to get your opinion, knowing as you do the feeling of your people. We wish to get your opinion first as to what you would do yourself, then what you think your people would do in the matter?—When Mr. Bryce and Mr. Ballance were asked these questions, they said “We must consult Parliament.” Now, when I am asked these questions in Wellington, I reply that “I must consult my tribe before answering them.”

122. I may tell you that I am not desirous you should answer my questions in such a way as to constitute a promise. I ask you only for your opinion—what you think?—Aye; I understand that.

123. Then I will repeat my question. Do you think that under this Bill settlement will be effected with their consent along the railway which is proposed to be built? I would also ask you to consider and tell this Committee how far the Natives would be prepared to treat with the Government for the sale or disposal of land along the railway?—I will answer the last part of your question at once. If this railway is made, and the Government and the Native owners can come to a unanimous understanding, then, perhaps, the land will be sold and leased. Is not that fair?

124. Yes; but I want to ask another thing arising out of that. Do you not think that a satisfactory arrangement might be made between the Governor and the tribes for the cession of the land along the railway rather than by the ordinary machinery for individual sale?—If the land were mine solely I could answer that question at once; but, seeing that Tainui is a great owner of land through which the railway runs, I cannot answer at once.

125. We do not want an answer about any particular owner, but we want an answer to the big question: whether, at the present time, you do not consider that this mode of dealing which I have suggested between the Governor and the tribes would not be a satisfactory method of dealing with the matter?—It depends entirely on the shape that the negotiations would take. I will not commit myself by saying that such negotiations should be carried on.

126. I wish you to know that I do not want to weary you, and therefore I hesitate somewhat in asking you some questions about this Bill. If you do not object, I should like to ask you, first, whether you have a right understanding of it, which I doubt. My first object, therefore, is to put my questions in such a way as to ascertain, if I can, whether you know the meaning of this Bill, and the working of the Committees under it. That is my object in putting many of these questions to you?—I know what my own mind is, but I am bewildered in respect of the clauses of this Bill. I know my own mind, and I have already told my Native friends that there are passages in this Bill of which I do not understand the meaning.

127. Do you understand that before any land can be dealt with by the Committee of any particular block it will have to be inquired into by the Native Land Court?—I will not consent to the Native Land Court adjudicating on land at present.

128. Do you understand that this Bill is founded on that: that that must be the first step?—It is true the Bill is founded on that understanding, but I will not consent to hand over my land to the Native Land Court at present. I have heard of the cries that have been brought up on all sides during the past year on account of the action of the Native Land Court.

129. Then you do understand that the Committees will not come into existence or have any power until the land shall have been taken through the Native Land Court?—The Bill states that such is to be the case: that Committees will have no power until the land has passed through the Court. But I do not agree with that. What I say is, that the Committee should have power—full power—to deal with the land in any case. That is only my own opinion.

130. Then, do I understand that you would set up the machinery of Committees to inquire into title, dealing with that first?—Aye, that is one of the theories, to let the Native Committees investigate the title to the land. I think that is feasible.

131. Now, I want to know whether you understand that, so far as the Committees are concerned, and so far as they are provided for in this Bill, they can have no effect until the Native Land Court has settled the title. Do you understand that?—I have heard that such is the proposal, but it is not clear to me. I do not agree; it is not my idea at all.

132. Now, I want you to understand that this is not a matter of opinion; it is a thing set forth; it is what is proposed to be the law. Do you understand that?—Yes.

133. Then, suppose the Committees come to the working of these amendments, whatever their number (seven) might be, do you think that a Committee appointed in this way, under which each owner may nominate seven or a less number, would work satisfactorily: that is to say, if one hundred people in a block would be satisfied to hand over the administration of their affairs to any seven in the block to represent them, all this being after the Court has adjudicated?—I will not consent to have land put through the Court.

134. I am asking about the working of this Bill. I am trying to get from you your opinion of it, as to the blocks on which the Court has already adjudicated?—I do not know how this will apply to lands which have passed through the Court. I can only speak of my own land—as to how the land in my own district will be affected. I cannot say how it will work as regards other lands.

135. I want you to say whether you think that it will be satisfactory to the owners of a block in which there may be fifty, or one hundred, or any number of persons, to appoint seven to administer their land, and to say absolutely what should be done with it; for that is what is proposed in this Bill?—I think the principle of Native Committees is a good one, and that it will work satisfactorily provided that it be arranged this way: the seven people who are elected to the Committee must clearly understand that their only power is to carry out the wishes of the owners of the land. They can only carry out those wishes when the owners have said what is to be done with the block. The owners must be able to say, “Do this,” or “Do that.”