

155. We have to deal with the Bill as we have it before us now?—And are our amendments to b left outside?

156. The amendments which you are now talking about are something outside altogether of what is now the law, which this Bill does not propose to change. I have left the subject of the Land Court now, and am about to ask you how the Bill will apply as it now is. Do you approve of this proposal that the owners of land, whatever their number, that seven of them should be empowered to act for the rest, and deal absolutely with the land that has been awarded to the whole of them?—It is not for me now to give my assent to that principle; it will be quite time enough to give my consent when I go back and consult the whole of my people; if they all agree, that will be time enough.

157. Do you not know that if this Bill passes into law it will be done: it will be outside of your consent?—It is not as if I were thoroughly conversant with the terms of this Bill; it is only recently that I have become acquainted with it.

158. But you can state what would be the effect upon yourself and on your people: you might show us what would be the effect of the management of that land which has been awarded to the whole of them in the hands of some elected out of the whole number?—I cannot say what the effect would be, because I have not yet been able to grasp the provisions of the Bill.

159. But you can answer whether you, as one individual, would like to hand over your interest in any particular block to be adjudicated on by seven, or a less number of Natives, elected by the majority of the people who are with you in the block?—I would do so if the Committee had my confidence; if they gave me proof that their administration would be right I would hand it over to them to deal with it.

160. Do you understand how the Committee is to be elected?—I do not know.

161. Do you understand that the Bill provides that seven people shall be elected by the greatest number of votes of the owners, however many they may be: each could vote for seven persons, and the greatest number will decide who are to be the Committee?—I do not know that such is the case; but I have heard that that is the mode in which the election of the Committee is to be carried out.

162. That being the case, as proposed in the Bill, do you agree to the principle to have your land adjudicated on by the Committee?—Yes; if I am one of the members of the Committee myself, I would agree.

163. That would have to be determined by the votes?—It is not likely I would be excluded; a just Judge will never be dismissed.

164. There are several other aspects of the working of these Committees that I want you to give me your opinion about. We will suppose that there are fifty owners in a block of land: they are to elect a Committee of seven out of their number: when they are elected, the ownership practically—that is the position of exercising the powers of ownership—goes from all but the seven, and the seven have to decide what is to be done with the land; whether it is to be sold, or whatever has to be done with it: those outside can no longer stop the proceedings. Do you concur that that is a desirable position?—I will not agree to that arrangement at all: the only thing I will agree to, is this: that the Committee of seven are to take their instructions from the whole of the owners of the land; that is from the tribe—from the people generally.

165. That is no part of the provisions of this Bill?—The amendments I have submitted are in the direction I mention.

166. I wish now to put another point of view to you: Out of these fifty people who own the land some of them disagree altogether, and would not hand it over for disposal. What do you think their rights ought to be: is it that their rights in the land should be respected?—The interests of the non-consenting persons should not be interfered with: it should not be sold or leased against their wish; it should be left in the hands of the whole people.

167. But if the Committee is elected and proceed, do you understand that this Bill gives them power to deal with the land?—Yes; but the Committee should only be elected by owners generally to carry out and give effect to the wishes of these owners.

168. Do you not see that, by the election of the Committee, that is to a certain extent obtained. Of the men elected, you say you would be one for certain with others; but you would be elected altogether, and all would administer the land?—Yes; but if the Committee are elected, they must be elected on this clear understanding, that they are to carry out the wishes of the people; and they are not to do anything without the authority of the owners.

169. But do you see this other point, that seven being appointed to deal with the land, four of that number would be the people who would actually decide how it was to be dealt with: you might be in the minority on such an occasion?—I think that the position should be just the same as the position of the Native Minister. He cannot do anything without the consent of Parliament; so that these four people must not be allowed to do anything without authority,

170. They can do anything right off when they are appointed: Ministers can only do what they are authorized to do?—I say, that the Native Minister is responsible to Parliament: that this Committee must be responsible to the owners. I will not alter my assertion that the land must be held for the whole of the owners.

171. But do you not see that when the election takes place it is gone from the owner?—I say again that the power of deciding what is to be done with the land must remain with the whole people: it is for the people to direct the Committee what to do with the land.

172. There is no use asking you any more questions to see whether you understand this matter or not. My questions and your answers indicate that you do understand; but I would again remind you that, whatever you may think of the mana of this land resting with the people, it will be gone as soon as the Committee is elected?—I say again that these Committees should not be authorized to deal with land; they should be merely for the purpose of carrying out the views of the owners: they should not have absolute power given to them.