

to the Crown?—The Maoris are not a people difficult to deal with; they are easily satisfied if the real authority is given to them in the first place; if it were done that way I think I would agree to the right of pre-emption.

197. *Mr. Hobbs.*] You have been speaking of the Native Land Court; I want to ask you whether you approve of the Native Assessor sitting in the Native Land Court?—I approve of the principle of having an Assessor to assist the Judges, provided I know that man to be a good man.

198. Has any evil resulted from that in the past?—I will not answer that question, because in regard to the Native Land Court I do not know what has been done in the past.

199. What is your objection to the Native Land Court?—Hearsay: I hear the administration is very bad now, and I will not hand over my pet lamb [*Interpreter*: He means the land] to be torn to pieces.

200. *Hon. Mr. Ballance.*] Would you explain what you mean by pre-emption?—That principle I understand is this: that if the Governor gives a higher price than any one else, I approve of selling the land to him. That is my idea of pre-emption; for what person would be so foolish as to take a small price when a larger one was offered him?

201. *Mr. Pratt.*] Is your objection to the Native Land Court on account of its refusal to grant a rehearing?—Yes.

202. *Mr. Wi Pere.*] On what grounds do you think a rehearing should be granted?—I mean in cases where there are good reasons for granting a rehearing. If there are good reasons for granting a rehearing, then I say grant a rehearing. If you do not find the true owner, that would be a good reason for rehearing. Another fear I have is this: that if we throw open land to be dealt with by the Native Land Court, seeing that we are an ignorant people and do not understand the working of that Court, our land will be awarded to those who understand the working of the Court. I am afraid lest the Court will be led away by their knowledge of conducting the cases so that the land will be handed over to them. Another objection I have is this: that the officers of the Court and the Assessor may be paid money to award the land to other persons than the owners.

203. *Hon. Mr. Bryce.*] Paid money? That is that they may take bribes?—Yes, that is what I mean.

204. *Mr. Wi Pere.*] If facilities were given for granting a rehearing would you approve of the Court?—Yes; because I would weigh in my own mind whether my land was properly dealt with or not: if I was not satisfied I could appeal for a rehearing.

205. Do you not think there is another tribunal that might adjudicate on Native land—namely, the Native Committee?—I think the Native Committees could adjudicate on the land, but if these Judges were wrong in the first instance, then the case of the land should be reheard again and again—even the third time; where the judgment was satisfactory, it might be referred to another tribunal to ratify it.

206. I would now ask you something about the Committees on separate blocks provided for in this Act?—I approve of this idea. Supposing every one in this room were the owners of a block of land, it would then be for them to elect the Committee. I approve of that idea: I think also that the people in this room who are the owners of the land should also elect the Board. I do not approve of the provision in this Bill which provides that the Chairman of the Native Committee should be a member of the Board. I do not approve of that idea: I say that the only powers of the Committee should be to carry out the express directions of the owners of the land; and that the Board also should only carry out the written instructions of the owners as conveyed by them to the Committee, and by the Committee to the Board. With regard to the settlement of land, I say this: that if the administration of our land be absolutely assured to us, then, in that state of things which Mr. Ormond has asked me about, it will likely come to pass that we may be able to provide for settlement of the land along the railway. It may come to that; but I do not approve of the Committee, or the Board, or the Government doing what they like with our land; selling it or leasing it, just as they please. I do not approve of that. I say that neither the Government nor any other person should buy or deal with the land, except through the people and the Board; it being understood that both the Committee and the Board are simply giving effect to the wishes of the owners.

207. Suppose a law is passed which provides for granting rehearings, and the power of refusing a rehearing is taken out of the hands of the Chief Judge, would you consent to have your land brought under the Committee or the Native Land Court?—Yes; I would consent. I do not agree to those provisions of the Bill which validate past transactions: that is one of the provisions which I object to. There are some clauses in this Bill that I object to: I object to these clauses which have regard to past transactions, for those transactions may have been wrong.

208. Do you not think that a Commission should be appointed to inquire into those transactions?—Yes, I do.

209. *Mr. Hobbs.*] Did you not further say, or imply, that you had no objection, if it were found that the past transactions were right?—Yes; if the past transactions were proper ones I think they should be validated.

210. *Mr. Ormond.*] Would you be willing that power should be given in this Bill to the Governor, or to the Minister—which is the same thing—to confirm any judgment that was given by the Commissioner; would you agree to that?—I would approve of those past transactions being validated, provided it was the wish of the whole of the owners of the land; that is the principle which I take my stand upon; everything depends on that.

211. *Mr. Wi Pere.*] Is it your great wish to expunge objectionable clauses from this Bill, and to substitute clauses meeting the views of the Natives? I will put the question again this way: is it your wish that the amendments—the printed amendments which I have submitted—should be incorporated with the Bill?—[*The Chairman*: You should ask Wahanui whether he knows them first.]?—I approve of the amendments brought forward by Wi Pere being incorporated, and the objectionable parts of the Bill taken out.