

232. Do you understand what I mean : with a European, when he gets the Crown grant for his land, there is an end ; there is no interference with him by anybody ; whereas under this Bill there is a Committee, a Board, and a lot of complicated machinery for managing Native lands ?—I think it is only right it should be so—that is, that the authority of administration should be vested in the Native owners of the land.

233. Do you approve of Wi Pere's suggestion, and—which is the main thing—do the Natives wish to hold control of the land in their hands ? Do you think that the power of selling land, or leasing it, or passing it through the Court, should remain solely with the owners of the land : that, although there might be Committees and Boards, both Committees and Boards should take their instructions from the owners ?—Yes.

234. And that the owners of a block should be allowed the power to dispose of the whole block as they thought fit, by sale or lease ?—Yes.

235. What do you say about the minority ?—The portion of the non-consenting party should be cut off and left with them.

236. But that is not in the Bill ?—That is suggested in our proposed amendments.

237. Do you consider that the Native Assessors work well in the Native Land Court ?—The work of the Native Assessors is bad : they have acted improperly.

238. Do you know of any cases of gross injustice where these Native Assessors have acted badly ?—I have heard quite recently of the Maungatautari case ; that is a case in point.

239. Are there any other cases ?—I have heard of other cases ; but this is one very notable case : one to which attention has been drawn.

240. Do you think there is any danger under this Bill of the Committees being got at in something of the same way ?—The difference is this : that the Assessors are not elected by the tribe, but the Committees should be elected by the owners.

241. Would there not be complaints after they were elected and had done what the Natives would not agree to ? Would not the Natives consider that it was their own fault : that they deserved to suffer because of electing men who had not acted properly ?—If they are detected doing anything wrong, then they should be dismissed and a fresh Committee elected.

242. But then the wrong is done ? Do I understand from you that the Natives do not want to part with their legal rights in the land to these Committees and Boards ; that they only wish such bodies to carry out the instructions of owners ?—I think, supposing there are fifty owners of a piece of land, and these persons give directions in writing to the Committee to lease or sell that land, then the Committee should have power to do so.

243. But suppose they are not unanimous ?—Then cut off the share of the dissentients.

244. *Hon. Mr. Bryce.*] I would like to have this matter made a little clearer. If I understand you right, you say that the whole of the owners must agree in giving a block into the hands of the Committee ?—Yes.

245. If the whole of the owners do not agree, then the disposal of the land must be held in abeyance until the subdivision is made ; is that your meaning ?—Yes.

246. Well, now, I would ask you how you think that subdivision ought to be made : who is the party to determine the boundary of those who wish to dispose of the land and of those who desire otherwise ?—The Committee can be appointed, also the Board ; and the Committee and the Board can direct the steps to be taken.

247. But do you not see that, in case the people object—that is, there is a minority who object—then the Committee cannot, according to your idea, be appointed ? That is why I ask whether every one of the owners must join in putting the land into the hands of the Committee ?—I have already stated that if there are four or five persons who do not agree, then a portion should be cut off.

248. The Committee would not come into existence until the whole of the owners should join ?—In the amendments we propose the whole of the owners should agree in writing to hand over the land. If they did not do so, then the shares of the non-consenting parties should be cut off.

249. But how is their share to be cut off if there is no Committee ?

*Hon. Mr. Ballance :* You assume that there is no Committee, but, according to his idea, there will be.

*Colonel Trimble :* Make it clear to his mind how it is that there is no Committee.

250. *Hon. Mr. Bryce.*] I am assuming that the Committee will not be elected at all, unless on the unanimous application or desire of the whole of the owners ?—There would be no dissentients as to appointing the Committee ; the only dissension would be about the selling and leasing of the land.

251. In that case, the Committee having been appointed, that Committee would have the power of disposing of the land by placing it in the hands of the Board : do you approve of that ?—I approve of the Committee leasing or selling land, providing they have received directions in writing from the owners authorizing them to do so.

252. You mean then, I understand, that the Committee should be elected, but it should not have the power of doing anything until it receives some further instructions from the owners ?—There are three distinct proceedings that would have to be taken, (1) for the owners of a block of land to elect their Committee, (2) to elect a Board, (3) for the owners to give written directions how they wish the land to be disposed of.

253. Do you understand that written directions from the tribe are not required by this Bill ?—We are aware that it is not in the Bill, but we propose amendments that it might be.

254. Then you think it ought to be in the Bill ?—Yes.

255. Now I come back to the old question. When these final directions for the disposal of the lands are given, must that be signed by every one of the owners ?—Yes ; each person must sign his name.

256. Every one ?—Yes.