remember the circumstances. I do remember that Mr. Stevens used to talk about this subject at the time. I remember that I was indignant at the law passing, because I thought an injustice was being done; but I have since admitted to Mr. Bryce that in forming that opinion I had done him some injustice. I did not know all the details; perhaps, if I knew as much as I afterwards knew about it, I would not have suspected it would do any injustice. You must not understand me as saying that the Government would guarantee anything; for it appeared to me quite a chance whether we got anything whatever except justice. I was quite willing to rest on that basis. I only wished that there should be nothing retrospective in that assurance.

370. I wanted to correct your impression of my giving assurances of the preservation of equitable claims, but, if necessary, I can bring evidence before the Committee on that subject. I think there must have been some misapprehension as to Sir George Whitmore's replies; and that he has been giving evidence to the first part of Part VII., instead of the second?—I was anxious to give particulars of all transactions that I was personally acquainted with. With regard to this second part, as I understand the subject, it is this: When land has gone through the Court the first step is to give what is called a "memorial of ownership" to the ascertained owners of the block. Subsequently a step is taken which is called getting a "certificate of title." When this legislation was set up the idea evidently was that these certificates would be taken out under the Act of 1873. This part of the Act applies to a great deal of land on the East Coast. I will give you an instance, which, being quite familiar to me, I am pretty certain that I can give an exact account of; it may also serve as an explanation of all such cases, for as it is in this case so it is more or less with the whole of the East Coast occupation. Near and about Gisborne there have been a few cases thoroughly completed, because the people at Gisborne had been able to get the Native Land Court to sit there. But when the Native Land Court first began to hold sittings on the East Coast it seemed to be the policy of the Government of the day, or of the Native Land Court at that time, to put as many names into the respective memorials of ownership as they could find, so that the chiefs were practically set aside by persons who were put in as owners. As these properties are usually dealt with there is no distinct statement of individual shares in the memorial of ownership, and the chief who would perhaps have a right to a large acreage finds himself practically with a proportion of three or four acres. Consequently in a block of that kind, in all cases on the East Coast, there are a great number of persons whose signatures must be got before you can comply with clause 62 of the Act of 1873, which has more or less guided all transactions of this kind since it was passed. In my case, in a block of five thousand acres (less 600 acres of the block to be a reserve), for which I gave £200 a year, I have 1,400 owners to sign. Every hereditary chief and every relation of every hereditary chief signed the lease within a few days of its being drawn. In all, out of each seventeen owners thirteen have signed my leases, two-seventeenths are dead, half a seventeenth cannot be found, if they ever existed, and one-seventeenth of the nominal owners and a half are to be found somewhere between the North Cape and Stewart Island. Resident on or near the land there are possible twenty men and women who might at a certain expense be got to sign a lease, but to get the rest must necessarily be a work of time. The shares of dead people can only be got through their successors, and these can only be declared when the Government gives us a Court. Now, I have considered my title for practical purposes is good enough to induce me to improve the land, and I have spent £12,000 on that small acreage. The Government must so far think that I have a good right, for they tax me very heavily under the property-tax for improving it; and also very heavily for local rates. They make me pay 20 per cent of the rent on thirteen and a half years' occupation. Now this is also precisely the case of other blocks held under "memorials of ownership" on the East Coast. The position that such occupants under a memorial of ownership are placed in is this: that much as they may have paid, and completely as they may have got their leases signed, these leases are held in law to be not illegal (for, if so, the Government would not make so much out of them by taxing the property held under them), but they are not valid, and the practice is, when there is a section of owners who do not want the lease to exist, they come before the Court and have their interests cut out. But wherever there is a reasonable ground for the belief that the whole will sign, then you must wait until you know whether the people will sign—as, for instance, in case of death of one of the parties, and the belief exists that his successor so far as is known of him will sign; but that can only be done when the law declares such a person to be the successor. The difficulty does not arise much in my case, for I have conceded a right to the Natives to run their horses and cattle all through, and to make any cultivations they like, and also to make ample reserves. But in other cases it has been found necessary to cut out the shares of those who did not want to lease; but when persons (Maoris) are brought from a distance the lessee has to bear great expense in bringing them, of maintaining them while they remain, and keeping them until they satisfy him that it was their signatures that were on the lease.

371. *Mr. Locke.*] As the law now stands the lessee has no means of applying to the Court?—In the Act of 1882 there was, I am aware, an intention that persons holding claims should be enabled to approach the Court.

372. But they cannot do it as the law now stands?—There is a translation of the word "person" which takes most people by surprise. At any rate, Mr. Whitaker, who was the exponent to me of the intentions of the Government, told me that the word "person" did not mean only a Maori person. I have not the Act of 1882 before me, but I think it can easily be found.

373. *Hon. Mr. Bryce.*] You are mistaken as to the intentions of the Government?—In that case the Government had one intention in the Upper House and another in the House of Representatives. Mr. Whitaker said that all transactions might be determined by the Native Land Court, and the word "person," I know, was put in with that intention.

374. No, it was not?—I must adhere to what I say, for I have a distinct recollection of this matter. The Native Land Court has since decided that "person" means a Maori only. The consequence is that the law remains in such a condition that Europeans cannot apply directly, and it has to be done in a circuitous way, the Natives vesting their lands in one "person," so that that