

office I have not lifted one single restriction except for the purpose of leasing, and do not intend to do so until a thorough inquiry has been made into the whole of the circumstances attending the sale of the land. I have now touched upon all the important parts of the Bill, but there may be many matters of which you will require an explanation, for I have not heard your discussion, and am not aware of the objections which you have taken to the Bill. The points to which I have referred you may not have noticed, and other points to which I have not referred may be, in your opinion, the important matters for consideration. I have heard that some objection has been taken to the name of the Bill—to the word “disposition.” If you can suggest a better name, I shall be only too glad to adopt it. Now, I should like to say one word before I conclude, because I should like to give an opportunity to those who object to the Bill or may not have received as full an explanation as they require with regard to the conduct of the four Native members in the House; for I have heard that those members have been severely censured by some people. I know why they were censured by some members of the House, and that was because they all combined to support the Government, and it was said that this was the first time they had all combined to support the Government. I suppose they supported the Government because they thought it was a good Government. You will perhaps be able to form a more impartial opinion on that point than I am. But this I will say, from my own knowledge, that no men could have devoted more time and attention to matters of Native interest than the four Maori members did during last session and the session before. No European members ever were more faithful to your interest than your own members were. I believe that that is the opinion of every man in the House. Of course, personally, I feel very grateful to them for another reason, because they have always treated me with great kindness and consideration, and therefore I only speak what I feel in the matter. Now, there are other matters outside the Bill, but I will not go into them at present, and am not going into them at all unless they are raised, because I do not know whether you wish me to touch on subjects outside of the Bill. I will now conclude by asking some of my friends to touch upon those points which they think of the greatest importance to the Maori people; and this I would like to say, in conclusion, that it is not my object to press this Bill upon the people. The Government, in taking charge of this Bill, have to face enormous difficulties. If you do not think that the Bill is for your welfare it is your duty at once to reject it. In one word, it is as much the Bill of the Native people as it is of the Government. I have done for the present.

*Henare Tomoana* : I am gratified at your having come to see us to-day, and for the patient way in which you have waited until we were ready to meet you, and also for the opportunities you have given us of discussing this important matter. I shall now explain what the views of the various tribes are with regard to this Bill. I can only speak of the matter with which I am perfectly conversant. I shall speak of the troubles under which the Natives labour with regard to the legislation that affects them. When the Native Land Court was constituted it was decided that no more than ten persons should have their names inserted in the Crown grant. It was clearly stated that those ten persons should be in the position of trustees, and the people acquiesced. After this, great trouble came upon the Natives. Then another Native Land Act was passed. The Natives were told that this Act was to be a good one, and for the benefit of the people and for their children hereafter. Only evil resulted from it. The Natives have been told as each successive Land Act was passed that it was for the Natives, but there has been only one result—evil has come upon the Native people. When I was a member of Parliament a law was passed to prevent the indiscriminate alienation of Native lands. Up to the present time, and particularly now in this new year, the Natives are living in the most peaceful state over the whole of New Zealand. This is why the Natives think that it is only right that they should give this Bill their most serious consideration. I am very much gratified with the explanation you have given us of your views; my heart is very thankful. I am very glad that you have afforded the Natives an opportunity of discussing this Bill, and also on account of your having come here personally to assist us in our deliberations. It is not a new wish of ours to meet the Native Minister face to face and discuss matters with him. It has been a fervent wish of ours for many years, but it is only now that our wish has been gratified. It must not be thought that the Natives are indifferent to this matter; they are discussing and considering it with their whole strength; they are endeavouring to come to some decision regarding it. I was glad to hear you say that you would be happy to receive any suggestions from the Natives. I also wish to express my thanks for your having agreed to strike out certain clauses in this Bill; you have not waited for this meeting to express its disapproval of those clauses, but you have voluntarily agreed to strike them out. Now that you have made your statement I hope you will wait patiently and discuss this Bill, because it is only by a joint discussion that we can arrive at a satisfactory conclusion. There are no troubles existing at the present time like the troubles that existed a short time ago. We are living now in a state of peace and quietness. I hope you will listen patiently to what we have to say, and return here again to-morrow if necessary, because we shall continue going on with this work, and perhaps we may be able to come to a final decision. After I sit down one of our number will get up and explain what our views are.

*Mr. James Carroll* : Salutations to you, the Native Minister. To my mind, your coming here is a satisfactory proof that you have the welfare of the Natives at heart; and, even if there are no good results from it, it can never be laid to your charge that you did not do your best. As you have given your explanation of the Bill, I will now reply, and state what our thoughts are respecting it. I would first state that this is the third day that this meeting has been engaged in discussing the provisions of the Bill, and on account of the difficulty of some of these clauses they have not yet come to a decision. We have been discussing the provisions of the measure, and I will now explain the resolutions we have arrived at so far. The meeting has come to the conclusion that the present title to the Bill should not be adopted. Secondly, the meeting has come to the conclusion that there should be no Land Board. Thirdly, that no power should be given to the Public Trustee, who is mentioned in the Bill; and the large powers given to the Commissioner and to the Governor in