

its work effectively, that would meet all present requirements—no difficulties would arise. Others say that the owners should all live in a state of communism on their lands; while many aver that the prosperity of the Natives depends upon their having the land individualized. It is only right that this meeting should consider all the aspects of the case. I thoroughly indorse what you have stated about the four Maori members. I can speak positively, because I was present in Wellington. They did their very best; and they gave us outsiders all possible assistance. You remarked that some complaint had been made against those four members, but those complaints have never reached me.

*Hirini Taiwhanga* : I greet you, the Native Minister, for having met the Natives here to-day. I have been deputed by my people, Ngapuhi, to come here and represent them, and also by the Waikato people. I approve of what you have stated—that those who object to the provisions of your Bill should stand up and state what their objections are. I stand up now to object to your Bill. I am speaking on behalf of my own tribe, Ngapuhi, and on behalf of Waikato also. After I have discussed your Bill, I shall speak about a meeting called by Mr. Grace, which affects the land of the King Natives. Thirdly, I shall refer to the loan of ten millions proposed by Sir Julius Vogel. Fourthly, the troubles of the Maoris, and the absence of morality amongst them. It is the wish both of Ngapuhi and Waikato that the law should be made to carry out the spirit and letter of the Treaty of Waitangi and the English Constitution Act—that is to say, the 71st section of the Constitution Act—which I shall read in English. [Read 71st section of the Act.] It is the wish of the Natives that some law should be drafted to carry out the spirit of this Act which I have just read. I have here the draft of a Bill which embodies these principles. [He then read the draft.]

*Wi Pere* : It has already been explained to you that this meeting has arrived at nothing definite with regard to the Bill before it. Mr. Carroll has already stated several of the matters which this meeting has been considering, and which it has made up its mind upon. It is because we have not come to a decision that we are not able to state clearly to you now what our views are. We think that the Government should only attempt to do what the people wish, and should not try to do more than carry out the wishes which the people have expressed. I think that the powers of the Governor should be more clearly defined. The Bill provides that the Governor may do certain things by Order in Council. This would cause a considerable amount of distrust. I shall now speak, Sir, about my own district, extending from Gisborne up to Waiapu. I speak with absolute certainty about that district, because I am well acquainted with it. The people in that district are still selling land; and if they go on at this rate, in two years from now, in my opinion, they will have no land left—that is, unless some Act is brought into force to restrain them from selling in this manner. From my place in Parliament I urged that some law should be passed immediately to restrain the people from disposing of the land. You, Sir, went to Gisborne and met the Natives there, and they made a request that you would take some steps to prevent the alienation of the land. Notwithstanding their having made that request to you, this last year the people have sold thirty or forty thousand acres of land. Now, with regard to the Frauds Prevention Act, I have never seen the good of that Act at all, because it is not until after the land is absolutely sold that inquiry is made. That is the fault of the Trust Commissioners. The Trust Commissioners do not see the Native sellers sign the deeds—they are not signed in their presence. These signatures are taken before Justices of the Peace and people at other places; and then, after the land is sold, documents are produced, and the Natives are asked to certify whether they held the land for themselves or for others; also whether they were paid in money or warlike stores; and the Commissioner, seeing that the Natives have signed these documents, signs the deed as a matter of course. These documents often state what is false; they state that the land is not being held for the benefit of others, which is quite contrary to the fact. As a matter of fact, the land thus disposed of is often held in trust for minors. It is here that I think the Trust Commissioners fail in their duty. This state of things is still continuing. If the Trust Commissioner would only make his inquiries before the land is absolutely disposed of, there would be some sense in it; but, as I have said, these inquiries are never made until after the land is sold; and, if objections are made then, it is no use, for the time has passed by for making them. I only allude to these matters because the wish of the meeting is that the only duty of the Committees shall be to give effect to the written wishes of the people—that the Committees should only act on the written instructions of the owners. They should not act in the same manner as the ten grantees, who used to act quite independently of the owners; and, again, the Committees should not behave in the same manner as some of the owners acted under the Act of 1867, when the bulk of the owners were not in a position to state how the land should be managed. If any trust had been imposed by the grant, then these ten grantees would not have been able to sell the land belonging to the tribe; or, if there was any machinery to compel the ten trustees to share the money properly with all the owners, it would have been well. The unanimous wish of the people in my district is to prevent single individuals from selling the land; so that, if the land is to be sold, it should be done by all the people, and not by one individual. If the present state of things is allowed to continue and the present bad laws remain in force, in a short time there will be no land left to the Natives. It is the sincere wish of the people in my district that the administration of the land should be in the hands of the owners of the soil, and it is for them to make known to the Government what they wish done—not for the Government to tell them what to do. The Government should not take away any of the authority that the Natives hold over the land. Now, as to your request that if we have any objections to the Bill we should make them known, I wish to ask, how can single Natives be prevented from selling the land? We are in favour of Committees being elected to manage the various blocks; we are altogether in favour of that idea; but there are certain objectionable clauses which we wish to be expunged, and better clauses substituted. Now, if we oppose this Bill altogether and refuse to accept it, what is to prevent the present evil from being continued? I shall not speak at length, or allude to the clauses seriatim, because the Bill is still under discussion by the Natives.