

*Te Puke te Ao*: We have not finished discussing the provisions of this Bill, as you have already been informed. I now wish to ask you whether you are agreeable to have this meeting adjourned till to-morrow, and thus give us an opportunity to go further into the matter and finish our discussion. I do not think that any person should get up in this meeting and state his own individual opinions, unless those opinions have been previously discussed by the meeting. This meeting is composed of people who have come from great distances. If we adjourn till to-morrow we shall then be able to let you have our decision.

*Hon. Mr. Ballance*: I think Mr. Te Ao's proposal to adjourn the discussion till to-morrow is a very good one, and if it is the wish of the meeting I will agree to that proposal. I can see from what Mr. Carroll said that the discussion up to the present time has been productive of much good, and, when the meeting has arrived at some definite conclusion as to the subjects on which he has touched, I shall have something to say. I shall also make some remarks with regard to Mr. Taiwhanga and his proposal for "Home rule." Now, I would like to say one word about another question, but before I explain the matter I would ask you not to mix this question up with the others, but discuss it after you have done the others. The question is the Maori franchise. You have four members in the House as you are aware, and no doubt you would like to have increased representation. I am bound to inform you that my own opinion is that Parliament will not add to the number of Maori members in the House, or to that of European members either; but there is a power which the Maori people may exercise that they never yet have exercised to any extent. They have the power now of voting for European members, or, in some districts where the Maoris are very powerful, they may put in Maori members. Now, I will explain to you what this franchise is: Every Maori who pays a rate to the Road Board or to the County Council or to the Town Council may have a vote, and every person who has twenty-five pounds' worth of land in his own right may have a vote. I think that where there is plenty of land in a district there is nothing to prevent the people from having the land divided, and so getting votes. And this is my opinion: that the Maori people will never have that influence in this country that they are entitled to have until they avail themselves of this power. I shall leave this matter now to your consideration, and accept the proposal of *Te Puke te Ao* that we should adjourn till to-morrow.

The meeting was resumed on the 6th January, when *Renata Kawepo* said: I wish to express my gratification at the patience you have displayed, Mr. Ballance, in waiting here day after day. I also thank you for your kind intentions towards the Native people, and for your earnest endeavours to do what is best for the Native race. I thank you very sincerely for what you have done in this respect. I am all the more thankful to you because I believe that people from a distance have been making slighting remarks as to the policy you have adopted with regard to the Natives. I do not know whether such is the case, but if it is I am perfectly indifferent.

*Henare Matua* said: Welcome, Mr. Ballance. My heart is rejoiced at your coming here to see us to-day. I welcome you and those associated with you. It is only right that you should show us some consideration, because we are all living under the Queen's laws. You hold the authority over us because you are called the Native Minister. Your action in submitting the Bill to the Natives for consideration is quite right. That is all. Long life to yourself and to the Queen, and prosperity. May God protect us all. Salutations to you.

*Tiaki Tai*, of Waimarama, said: I welcome you on behalf of all the people assembled here. When Sir Donald McLean was Native Minister it was his custom to go and see the people, but no Minister since has followed in his footsteps, except yourself. You have submitted your Native Land Disposition Bill to us, and we have had an opportunity of considering it, and your object in coming here to-day is to discuss it with us. I hope that you will not be deterred by any slighting remarks that may have been made about your coming here to see us. I wish you prosperity, and thank you for having come here.

*Wi Waka Rangiwakaewa*, from Wairarapa, said: Welcome, Mr. Ballance, welcome. Come and see us and advise us what to do. Help us to remove the evil resting on the Native people. You have come here to bring us peace and prosperity. When you took office you found many troubles resting upon the Maori people; but you have brought the light in upon them. We hope that during the time that you and your Government are in office you will dispel all gloom. The people all rejoice, and are very glad at your having come here to make us unanimous in searching after what is best for ourselves.

*Hikawera*, from Wairarapa, said: I welcome you, the Native Minister, to this meeting. This meeting is composed of representative men from various parts of the Island. You have added *éclat* to the meeting by coming personally. This is as it should be. I am very grateful to you for having come. It is only right that you should come here to listen to our sentiments, and assist us as you are doing. My heart is rejoiced that you have done this, because it carries out the opinion that we had previously formed, that yours is a good and just Government. Your Government have given the Maoris an opportunity for the first time of discussing legislation affecting them and their land. I desire to express my thanks to the Premier, Mr. Stout, and to the Governor, and to the whole of your colleagues also for their policy in regard to the Maoris,

*Rongowhitiāu*, from Rotorua and Waikato, said: Salutations to you, the Minister for the Native people. I come from the middle of the Island. It was on account of your Native Land Disposition Bill having been distributed amongst the Natives that I came to this meeting. My friends, the chiefs of this district, invited me to come here so that we might discuss some policy which would be for our mutual benefit. I am very glad that you have come here to take part in our deliberations. We are all met together here under the law of the Queen, and in support of peace and good-will. We have arrived at a definite conclusion with regard to some of the provisions of the Native Land Disposition Bill; but others we have not been able to come to a decision upon. I ask you to give effect to the resolutions that we have arrived at, because they embody the wishes of the Native people, and will be the means of bringing prosperity to them,