

some newspapers have stated; they have made disparaging remarks about this meeting, and also about your having come here to see us. This slight is not offered only to you as Native Minister, but it is offered to all the chiefs who have come here to attend this meeting. What benefit have the newspapers of New Zealand ever conferred upon the Native people? What effort have they ever made on behalf of Natives? What assistance have they ever offered to the Natives? I thank you, the Native Minister, for having waited here for us day after day to see what would be the result of this meeting. I shall now allude to another matter. I hold in my hand a document which contains a request that your Government will do away with the law which provides that the Native land duty shall be paid in advance, in one sum; secondly, that the rates on unoccupied Native land may be abolished. I hope that these will be abolished; at all events, I ask that you will consider this matter.

*Poari Kuramate*, of Whanganui: I think it is a matter of congratulation for the people assembled here that the Native Minister has come to see us. We ought to be very thankful that he has come here to assist us in discussing the Bill before the meeting. Notwithstanding that we were travelling companions—that we came here together—I wish to say something to him with regard to the matters now under discussion. Salutations to you, Mr. Ballance. Salutations to you all. I have come here to represent the people of the West Coast. Since our arrival we have been continually considering the various provisions of the Bill submitted to us by you. We have come to a decision regarding some of its provisions, but others we have not yet decided about. You will be informed to-day of the progress we have made. I have asked during this meeting that the Maoris should be allowed a voice in the government of their matters. You have agreed to that principle, because I heard you say as much in your speech yesterday. This meeting has now concluded its labours; all that remains is to tell you what has been done. I have already stated that I wish another meeting to be held at Whanganui to further discuss this Bill.

*Hon. Mr. Ballance*: It has given me great pleasure to hear the various speeches which have been made to-day by the members of the different tribes. Those speeches alone are sufficient reward to me for coming here to see you, because I think they express the friendly feelings of the great body of the Natives in this Island. I can only say, in reply, that it has been the object of the Government and myself, as far as possible, to make our tenure of office one which the Native people can appreciate. Our object has been to make the Natives feel that the Government is for them as well as for the European portion of the population, and to make them recognize, one and all, that the intentions of the Government are to protect their true interests. I again say that I thank you, on behalf of His Excellency the Governor, and Mr. Stout and all the members of the Government, for your wishes towards them. I know from conversation with the Governor that he has the most friendly feeling towards the Native people, and your members will tell you that, from speeches which he has made in the House, the Premier—Mr. Stout—is the staunch friend of the Maoris. Our sole object, then, is to administer the laws which now exist so fairly and so impartially that all may recognize their justice; and, further, our desire with regard to new laws is to have them so framed that the Native people will come to recognize that these laws are for their benefit. References have been made to the visit which is expected from me, some time during the recess, to the Ngati-porou country—Waiapu and other places. I repeat that it is my intention to visit the people, as far as I am able, at their different settlements before the next session of Parliament. Now, reference has been made to some slighting remarks which appeared in a newspaper. Renata and Tomoana have referred to this. I wish to say this: that if I were influenced by any remarks of the kind I should not be worthy of my position. But there is a very old proverb—as old, almost, as the world itself—that it is the privilege of the weak to be abusive; and now we will dismiss that subject altogether. Our friend Hirini Taiwhanga has brought forward some business which is not, perhaps, generally entertained by the people. I will say with regard to his Bill that, while I am not prepared to support it, I am prepared to have that Bill printed at the expense of the Government, without any charge to him, so that the people may see it; because, whether we agree with it or not, it is only right that it should be thoroughly ventilated and known. I am afraid, however, that if that Bill became law it would be very unjust to the Native people. So far as I understand it, it is meant to create a new province somewhere in the Waikato, I think. At any rate, he has mentioned the Constitution Act, which refers to some district being set apart. Now what benefit would that be to the whole of you, unless you live in the Waikato? I am afraid, therefore, that that Bill would not suit the interests of the people who do not live in that particular district. I shall say very little more about that. I do not understand exactly what Taiwhanga means. I am prepared to discuss the question with him freely, and to be convinced if he can convince me; but, so far as I at present see, his propositions are not for the benefit of the Maori people. He says that he has two requests to make, and one is that I am to urge some one to cease the survey in the Waikato. In answer to that, there is no survey going on in the Waikato. The survey of the external boundary has been completed, and that was done at the request of Wahanui, Taonui, Rewi, and the chiefs of the Waikato and Ngatimaniapoto Tribes. Now, Taiwhanga says that he represents Waikato. How can he represent Waikato, since they themselves have asked us to perform this survey? We have only complied with their own request. Then he says that we are to stop prospecting. With regard to that point I have only this to say: that it is not more than a fortnight since I received a request from a great number of Ngatimaniapoto chiefs that prospectors might be allowed to go out into the country, and even the King's Prime Minister, Major Te Wheoro, was very angry because we would not allow some prospectors to go out whom he wished to send; and actually wrote Home a letter to a society in England, complaining that the Government would not allow his prospectors to go out. The letter was sent out to this Government by Lord Derby, and I replied that it was not correct—that we were quite willing to allow prospectors to go out. I am in this position: A number of chiefs in the Waikato ask me to do a thing, while Taiwhanga says that I am not to do the same thing. I have only to ask, which is the voice of the Waikato?