

give you a copy of the proposed amendments in the hope that you will have them incorporated in the present Act.

*Airini Tonore* (Mrs. Donnelly): I welcome you, Mr. and Mrs. Ballance, also Mr. Lewis and Captain Mair. I thank you for having come here in response to the invitation of the Natives. It is only right that you should come here to listen to our deliberations on the Bill which you have submitted for our consideration. My opinion on this Bill was formed when it was first brought before the House. I think it would have been better to have submitted copies of the Bill to us then, so that we might have had more opportunity of discussing its provisions. Seeing that this is a matter which affects the Natives very vitally indeed, they should have the fullest opportunity of considering it, and they should have the longest time possible afforded for their deliberations. That is all I have to say with regard to the Bill. You have been appointed a Minister in the first place for the Natives, and it is only right that you should bring forward a Bill for the Maoris. I will allude to the Native Land Bill brought in by the late Sir Donald McLean during the time he was Native Minister, and to the Bills brought in by other Native Ministers. The Europeans first set up the Native Land Court, and under the first Native Land Court laws mortgages over Native lands were legalized. Sir Donald McLean did away with the law which legalized mortgages. After Sir Donald McLean, Mr. Bryce was the Native Minister who brought in the Rating Act. I do not object at all to the principle of imposing rates on Native lands that have passed the Court, but I think it is unjust to rate land which has not passed the Court; it amounts almost to confiscation. I think that you, Mr. Ballance, have already done a great deal with regard to the Native people; you have been able to make railways over land the Native owners of which have hitherto objected, and you have brought Tawhiao over to your side, who was hitherto an opponent. Now, with regard to this Bill of yours, my word is this: I do not object to the Bill, but what I ask is that it should be left alone for the present; let us have some more time to consider it. Do not bring it before the House next session; leave it alone for a while longer, so that the people in other places may further consider it, and also that you may have more time to think over the matter, and it may be that after next session we shall be able to agree definitely upon some measure which will be for the benefit of all.

*Hirini Taiwhanga* said that doubt had been thrown on his statement that he was the mouth-piece of Waikato. He had advised Honana to have two or three people sent to represent Waikato at the meeting, but Honana said it was a meeting to blind the eyes of the Natives. He told Honana that that was not the case, but it was a meeting for the purpose of discussing their troubles. In reply to this he (Taiwhanga) received a letter from Honana as follows: "Salutation. Your letter has been received, in which you explained a policy of Sir Julius Vogel in regard to the ten-million loan. I have read your letter to all the people. Well, as you are going to that meeting you might by chance come across something. It may be that some good will result from that meeting. That meeting was called, as I understand, by Renata Kawepo, and the Native Minister will stand before the meeting. That is why I repeat my word to you. Is this meeting for the purpose of opening the eyes of the people, or is it meant to blind them? Consider this: the Government have appointed Mr. Grace Land Purchase Officer for Waikato and Ngatimaniapoto, and the Government have authorized prospecting for gold over that country." The letter was signed by Honana Maioha, who also asked that Taiwhanga would write and tell them what was being done at the meeting. Notwithstanding what Mr. Ballance had said about Te Wheoro having applied for prospectors, he (Taiwhanga) said it was wrong, because three or four hundred of them had signed a document binding the Native chiefs of New Zealand together. Tawhiao signed first, and he was followed by Kawhiti and thirty or forty chiefs of Ngapuhi. It would be wrong of any section of Ngapuhi to depart from the terms of that agreement.

*Hon. Mr. Ballance*: I should like to say just one word with regard to the delegation of the Waikatos. I cannot admit that Honana has any right to send a delegate to represent the whole of the Waikato people, and I cannot admit that the letter which Taiwhanga has read authorizes him to be a delegate at all. Honana does not say in the letter, go to the meeting, or stay away. Now, I do not think that I should be called upon to discuss the ten-million loan, and I am quite sure that our friends do not wish me to discuss that question now. If they wish me to discuss it, of course it would give me great pleasure to do so.—(No, no.)—I was very much gratified by the speech made by Mrs. Donnelly on this occasion. I admit, of course, that the very fullest opportunity should be given for the discussion of the Bill, and with regard to that question I will tell you what I intend to do in the matter. I intend to embody the amendments which we can agree to in the Bill, have it translated, and sent round to all the tribes in New Zealand in sufficient time before next session of Parliament to enable them to give it the necessary attention before the House meets, and then it will be for them to make any further remarks or amendments which may suggest themselves to them. Now, one word with regard to Native Committees. I recognize that these district Committees may be made very useful bodies, and I have tried to strengthen their hands, as I will show you. I gave authority for all applications for surveys of Native lands to be sent by the different Registrars to the Chairmen of the Native Committees, and that is now done, and every Committee knows when an application sent in for land is to be heard at the Court. In order further to enable them to perform their functions I submitted a vote of, I think, £600 last session to pay the Chairmen of the Native Committees to perform their duties, and every Chairman is now enabled to frank letters; they receive stationery, and they each receive £50 a year to enable them to perform their duties. You will therefore see that my desire has been to strengthen the hands of these Committees, and to enable them to carry on more useful work than they have hitherto been able to do. I believe that they should have further powers, and, as I understand a resolution has been passed by this meeting to that effect, I can only say that I will read that resolution carefully, and give it my best consideration. We are increasing these Committees and the number of the districts. For instance, we have taken steps to give Tuwharetoa, of Taupo, and