

money, &c., would not the owners of the block object? We have agreed to allow the Chairmen of district Committees to assist the Commissioner in dividing the rents belonging to the owners of certain blocks. I think that is quite sufficient to give to the Chairmen and the Commissioner, and let all arrangements relating to the sale or leasing of the block remain with the Committee of the block and the Commissioner. I think that great confusion will arise if Chairmen of district Committees are allowed to take part in fixing the amount of rent, &c. If the Native Minister can make a suggestion with regard to the advice of the Chairmen of the district Committees being asked as to the disposal of the land then it will be less objectionable. With regard to what the Minister said about the Maoris increasing their power in Parliament that is quite clear. In my opinion the great obstacle will be the laws relating to the subdivision of the land. If increased facilities can be given for the subdivision of land, then I think this proposal would be much more practicable; because a man must have a Crown grant for a piece of land in severalty of not less than £25 value before he can register his vote. If the Natives were only united they might be able to accomplish it. I now want to ask the Native Minister a question with regard to a matter affecting my own district. I know a certain chief who pays rates and has to contribute also under the property-tax. I ask if you are prepared to bring about an alteration of the law so that this trouble may not rest upon the Natives. These lands referred to are held by the Natives under Crown grant. The Europeans think that the provisions of the property-tax apply as also do the provisions of the Crown and Native Lands Rating Act. I think a schedule should be published showing the amounts charged against the respective blocks which are paid by the Colonial Treasurer. The Maoris are in perfect ignorance as to what rates are being paid by the Government. I saw a Proclamation which set forth the various blocks and the amount of rates on each block; this was only notified one day; if it had been placed in a conspicuous place every one would have had an opportunity of seeing it. The Government are paying rates on a great number of Native blocks, and the Natives are in total ignorance as to the amounts of those rates. It may be that if the Natives were informed of the exact sums of money that the Government were paying on their blocks they would be able to refund to the Government those rates while the amount is still small; as it is they know nothing about it, and those rates go on accumulating until it will be beyond their power to refund the amount. I have brought this matter before you because you have already stated that you see an objection to this Act, and would like to get it repealed; and I only think it right that you should know what was taking place, and supposing you are not able to get a repeal you might have an alteration made to meet these cases that I speak of. I hope that you will consider this matter and have it referred to the law officers of the Crown.

*Mr. Harris, of Gisborne:* Sir, I should like to make a few remarks. I will speak in English if the meeting has no objection. I do not intend to take up much of your time, because the various speakers who have addressed you have somewhat exhausted the subject. I should like, however, to say this: that it is no small thing that has brought the people here from all parts of the Island. The land is the life of the people, and if that is allowed to be frittered away our place as a people will know us no more. It is in consequence of the importance of the subject brought forward for discussion that I have come here. Sir, I cannot say that I approve of your proposed Bill, but I am prepared to accept any measure which will meet the wishes of the people. Where I cannot get the whole loaf I shall take half a one. I think that the time has arrived when the Native people should have a larger voice in the management of their lands than they have had in the past. In past years, when the Natives were as infants and did not understand European affairs, it was right that the Government should make laws and have the management of their lands; but now they have been educated and have gained experience through the loss of thousands of acres of land, and are now, I think, able to manage for themselves, with certain restrictions. I do not urge upon you that we, as a people, should have the sole control and management of our lands; for instance, I should be very sorry to see the law doing away with mortgages repealed, or I should not like the people to be able to sell land without the consent of all the hapu; but I think that no Native who wishes to have his piece cut out should be debarred from having it cut out. There is another matter which you touched upon, Sir, and that is the question of the franchise. I have said that the Maoris as a people are not so ignorant as they were in the days gone by, and I say now that the average Maori is as good, intellectually, as the average European. Holding that opinion, I think the time has come for doing away with separate Maori representation. A European, after living in the country six months, can vote, even if he has no land or house. Put us in the same position, and do away with special representation. With reference to the 5 per cent., I am pleased that the people have seen that it is the proper thing to adopt. The strongest argument in my mind in favour of it seems to have been lost sight of by the people—the gain we get by all landsharks and interpreters being done away with will more than compensate for the 5 per cent. charged. I have now a few questions to put to you. The first is this: Supposing the Native Land Disposition Bill is thrown out, are you prepared to add clauses to the Native Land Consolidation Bill giving Committees of owners power to dispose of their land? My second question is: Will you introduce a measure empowering District Native Committees to investigate hapu or individual rights, with appeal to the Native Land Court? Will you introduce or support any amendments in the law to enable children of half-castes, by Europeans, to succeed to the interests of their half-caste parents?

*Airini Tonore (Mrs. Donnelly)* said that one matter had been omitted by Mr. Carroll, that was with regard to the Committees for the various blocks. Supposing a European was very anxious to acquire a block of land he might influence certain members of the Committee by giving them money. She hoped that steps would be taken to prevent anything of that sort. Referring to what Mr. Ballance had said on the first day of the meeting, that they should take steps to have the land subdivided, so that the Natives might be enabled to vote, seeing that the Natives were the owners of the land in New Zealand, she considered that the franchise should be extended to them, without obliging each man to have land worth twenty-five pounds in his own right. The Natives all had a