

great stake in the colony, and many Europeans voted whose only possessions in the colony were the clothes they wore and what they carried about with them; the only condition was that they should have lived in the colony for six months. These vagrant Europeans were allowed to elect members to Parliament, who go there and make laws which are a burden upon the Natives. Regarding the rates, Mrs. Donnelly was glad that the Minister was in favour of abolishing the Native Lands Rating Act, so that no rates might be imposed on Native land which had not passed the Court. If that Act were repealed she would be quite satisfied for the Native land duty to remain in force, but thought it would be better still to have both of them abolished. She thought the 5 per cent. deducted by the Bill was quite sufficient, because it should be considered that the Natives bear their full share of taxation. If a Native went to a storekeeper to buy a blanket, the storekeeper would at once raise the price of it. Europeans were not charged so much as Maoris, and were allowed a discount of one or two shillings in the pound, which was never allowed to Natives. She heartily indorsed what Mr. Harris had said about special Native representation, and considered that the franchise should be extended to the Maoris, and then the special representation could be done away with. Their present system of representation was of no practical value, as the Europeans still went on making laws for the Natives.

*Hirini Taiwhanga* reiterated, with regard to the prospecting in the Waikato, that he represented the feeling of the people there.

*Wi Pere* said that he wished to speak about "The Native Committees Act, 1883." He would like an amendment inserted giving power to deal with all claims to land brought before it by the Native owners. He would like the Schedule to the Act done away with. He explained that all the Committees under the Act had been appointed, but the matter contained in the Schedule prevented the Committees from doing anything—namely, that both parties must sign an agreement promising to abide by the decision of the Committee. If that clause were insisted on, the Committees would never be able to do anything. He would now give his own private opinion about the idea of electing Committees to manage the various blocks of land. It should be provided that, when the election of a Committee takes place, the absence of a number of the owners should be no bar to the election. The majority should have power to elect the Committee, and when Committees were elected it should be their first duty to excise the shares of the absentees and of the dissenting owners. If they had to wait until all the owners were gathered together the elections would never take place, or if the people were required to be unanimous then a Committee would never be elected. The rights of the absentees, however, should be protected. He made these remarks because he saw that the Act of 1883 was deficient. There was no real power given to the Committees.

*Hon. Mr. Ballance*: I shall now refer to what the various speakers have said, beginning with Mr. Carroll. Mr. Carroll thinks that it would not be advisable for the Chairmen of District Committees to take any part with the Commissioner and the Committee of the block in the disposal of the land, and I agree with him there. Then he has referred to the way in which the Natives may increase their power by having their names placed on the electoral roll, and says that want of unanimity among the people themselves may prevent this. I should like to say that want of unanimity in a people is perhaps the best sign you could possibly get of their freedom: a free people always has differences of opinion, and always expresses those differences; but there are great principles on which all can unite, and, if you agree with the principle that every man should have his own Crown grant for his piece of land, I see nothing to prevent that from being carried out, or if a man pays only a shilling a year in rates then he is entitled to a vote. I will come to this matter, however, a little further on. Mr. Carroll has referred to the rates and the property-tax; I will bring what he says before the Colonial Treasurer. I fully agree that the schedule should be published long enough to give the people all the information. I think the law is that both rates and property-tax must be paid. The payment of one does not give exemption from the other. That, I believe, is the law now. I quite agree that joint tenancy is a very injurious thing. Then, with regard to succession orders; when I went through the districts last year I found that the cost of a succession order amounted to about £1. I represented to the Chief Judge that this was far too much, and had it reduced to 5s. Now, I believe that we have power to remit these duties in cases where no successors are appointed, and, agreeing with what Mr. Carroll has said, I shall take steps immediately on my return to Wellington to have the duty on the cases he has mentioned remitted altogether. I may say that since I have been in office I have done something to have the Native Land Court duties reduced. Mr. Harris thinks that the Bill is good as far as it goes, and that half a loaf is better than none. Well, my experience is that we must take reforms just as we can get them, for perfection never can be attained at once. Mr. Harris expresses the opinion that, intellectually, the average Maori is as good as the average European. That has long been my opinion. Now, this brings us at once to the great question whether the separate representation should be done away with. Mr. Harris asks whether I am in favour of the Maori Representation Act being repealed. My answer to that is this: I believe the time is coming when it will be repealed, and, if the great bulk of the Maoris were in favour of it being repealed, I would support the repeal; but I hold a principle—never part with any power which you have, unless you are sure of getting some other power equivalent to it. I know the history of this question well, and, when it was proposed some years ago to place the Maoris on exactly the same platform as the Europeans, it was strongly resisted by a large number of people in this Island, and for this reason: they knew that, if every Maori had a vote, a large number of them would have no chance of ever being returned to Parliament. They have told me so themselves again and again. Now, I am afraid that, if we attempted to introduce this reform, possibly the House might reject it, and take away from the Maoris some of the power which they now have. But whenever you are ready to ask for representation the same as the Europeans, and to do away with your own members, I shall consider it my duty to support your wishes in that respect. I will tell you the