

reason that I ask you to take advantage of the power which exists, it is this: it is now the law of New Zealand, you can therefore take advantage of it without the intervention of Parliament at all. I believe that it would be a wise thing to do in another respect, for it would lead to the subdivision of the land, which I think you should all strive to attain. That is my answer therefore to that question; but I may say that I should consider it a great loss if your own Maori members were out of the House, unless their place be taken by others having the same knowledge of the customs and wants of the Native people; and would you be able to obtain this if the special representation were abolished? But no possible harm, only good, can come of taking advantage of the law as it exists. Mr. Harris asks whether an alteration will be made in the law to enable the children of half-castes by Europeans to succeed to the interests of their half-caste parents. I cannot say that I have studied all the effects of this proposal. I know that Sir George Grey has advocated it in the House, while others have opposed it. My own opinion is that the laws of succession should be the same in the case of Natives as in the case of Europeans. I think that there should be no difference between them, and unless I see very strong reasons against it I shall be prepared to introduce that amendment in the Bills I intend to bring down next session. Mr. Harris asks whether, if the Native Land Disposition Bill is rejected, I will support a measure giving the Committees of owners power to regulate their lands; as this is the main provision of the Bill itself, I am afraid that if the Bill is lost there would be no chance of getting the provision carried in any other form. I, of course, am thoroughly in favour of the principle, and, if I see any chance of giving effect to it, I should be prepared to do so. I believe that if we have the Natives on our side we shall carry this Bill and the principles that it contains. Mr. Harris asks whether I approve of the district Committees having power to investigate titles, with an appeal to the Native Land Court. Yes, I am in favour of that; and I hope to be able to introduce some measure which will give larger powers to the district Committees; and since I am talking about the Committees I may refer to what Wi Pere has said. I am in favour of giving them power to deal with civil cases which are brought before them. Mrs. Donnelly has referred to some points of considerable importance in the Bill, and thinks that care should be taken to prevent bribery of the members of the Committee. I think that the utmost care should be taken in that respect, and I hope that there will be no fear of anything like bribery on a systematic scale being carried on. That has been my care in drawing up the Bill in the first instance, but I am aware that, however carefully a measure may be devised, bribery may take place under it. Mrs. Donnelly asks whether a law could not be introduced by which every Native could have a vote, and refers to the fact that every Native has a place of his own, unlike many Europeans. I thoroughly agree that the Maoris are entitled to the same representation as the Europeans; but, as I have said, you must consider what you have got now, and also what you will lose by the change, before you ask for exactly the same privileges as the Europeans; but I can tell you this, that the moment the Native people express, with a voice anything like a unanimous one, their wish to have this change, you will find a large party in the House prepared to support you. That party does not wish to take from you the privilege which you now enjoy of special representation, because they are afraid that it would be looked upon by the Natives themselves as an Act hostile to them. Mrs. Donnelly says that the Natives contribute largely to every kind of taxation. That is quite true, and I am always pointing out that they contribute more, head per head, than the Europeans do, although there is a very large party in this country who say they do not contribute their fair share; but my opinion is that they do, in the purchase of goods which pay duty, and therefore I contend that they are entitled to all the privileges to which the Europeans are entitled. I hope that this question of representation will be fully discussed amongst you, and that you will be able to make up your minds upon it. Wi Pere has referred to the Committees for the blocks, and considers that the rights of the absentees should be protected. I agree with that, and I think that the Bill does protect the rights of absentees, although, if men will not perform their duties by attending the elections and things of that kind, how can you protect them? There is a provision that any Native can have his share cut out, and exempted from the operations of the Committee. I think I have now gone over all the various topics which I intended to refer to in answer to questions, and I hope that your opinion is that I have answered them as fully as possible. I have tried to make them clear to you, and I hope you have been able to follow me. There are one or two other matters which I wish to refer to. First of all, as to the right of the Natives to have their own people introduced into the Civil Service, I am very anxious that the Natives should have every chance of getting a fair proportion of their own people into the service of the colony. Of course it must depend to a great extent upon the education which they have received. I have carried this principle into practice so far as my own departments are concerned by introducing some young men who have been educated at the different colleges, and I asked Sir Julius Vogel, who is Commissioner of Telegraphs and Postmaster-General, to make provision for a certain number of Native youths entering that branch of the service, and he has promised me that he will make regulations on the subject. I think that this will be a great boon to the Native people, and I consider that they should aim at getting their children educated as well as possible. Mr. Stout, the Minister for Education, is very anxious that the Natives should receive a good education, and a large amount of money is being paid every year for the erection of schools and the payment of teachers, in order that the Native children may be educated; and wherever there are sufficient children for a school, and a request has been made for the establishment of one, Mr. Stout has never refused to accede to that request. He asks you in return to see that your children attend the schools with regularity. I think I may now conclude, but I shall be happy to make any further explanations.

*Henare Tomana and Mr. Carroll* said that the Minister's explanations were perfectly clear.

*Henare Matua* said the Native Committees Act provided that a quorum should consist of five members. He thought that two and the Chairman would be sufficient. No doubt the various Committees would be able to make valuable suggestions, which might be embodied in any Act amending the Act of 1883.