

1886.
NEW ZEALAND.

NATIVE MEETING AT HASTINGS

(NOTES OF).

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

THE Hon. Mr. Ballance, upon the invitation of the Natives, proceeded to Waipatu, near Hastings, on the 2nd January, 1886, accompanied by the Under Secretary, Native Department, his Private Secretary, and Captain Mair, Native Interpreter.

A large number of Natives was assembled on the occasion, comprising representative chiefs from the principal tribes of the Island, excepting that of Waikato.

The meeting had been called together by Renata Kawepo, Henare Tomoana, and other prominent chiefs for the purpose of considering the proposed Native Land Administration Bill.

The following are shorthand notes of the speeches made :—

Henare Tomoana : Welcome, welcome, the stranger. I am very glad that you have come to see us in the new year. I greet you. The people assembled here bid you welcome. When Sir Donald McLean was alive it was his custom to visit the Native people at their various settlements. He went over the whole Island, and so visited them. The Native Ministers who succeeded him, however, have not followed in his footsteps. They have not thought fit to visit the Natives at different places, and inquire into their grievances. We welcome you the more cordially because you accepted our invitation to come here and meet us. This is the new year, let all the works be done in it be new. I will now read an address of welcome from the Natives assembled : “ Welcome, the Honourable the Minister for Native Affairs, welcome, Mr. Ballance. We are very grateful to the Government, and to you for coming here to see us face to face. Our hearts are rejoiced because you have come here in accordance with our invitation, and stand in our presence now. We thank you for your consideration in submitting your Bill for discussion by the Native tribes of this Island ; and we appreciate your kindness in accepting our invitation, and sending your Bill here for the second time for our consideration. We, the chiefs, tribes, and hapus of Heretaunga, together with the chiefs from all parts of the Island, have much pleasure in expressing our gratitude to you. The following tribes are represented in this address : viz., Ngaiterangi of Tauranga, Ngapuhi, Ngatiawa of Whakatane, Ngaitai, Te Arawa, Tuhoe, Ngatiporou, Rongowhakaata, Te Whanau-a-Rua, Te Aitanga-a-Hauiti, Ngatikahungunu of Te Wairoa, Ngatiraukawa of Waikato, Ngatiraukawa of Otaki, Wairarapa, Whanganui, Rangitane, Ngatimutuahi, Ngatipakapaka, Ngaitahu, Ngatimarau, Ngatiwharenui, Toroiwaho, Te Whatuia-piti, Ngaiterangikoianake, Papatuamaro, Ngatitekura, Ngatiwhakaiti, Ngatikurukuru, Ngaitamatera, Ngatihawea, Te Upokoiri, Ngatihinemanu, Ngatitukuaterangi, Ngatihinepare, Ngatimatepu, Ngatipoporo, Ngatikeri, and Ngatihori. These have all assembled here to welcome you, Mr. Ballance. We are exceedingly grateful to you for coming here, and we will disclose our thoughts to you, so that there may be unity in thought between us, in accordance with the peace which we now enjoy through Her Majesty's Treaty of Waitangi, in which Her Majesty, regarding with Her Royal favour the Native chiefs, protected their just rights and property. Therefore may we grow up together, and our descendants after us, for ever and ever.—God save the Queen ! ” Signed by Henare Matua, Renata Kawepo, Henare Tomoana, and seventy-three other Natives.

Renata Kawepo : Welcome, Mr. Ballance, the Native Minister. I wish to greet you for having come here to see us. I thank you very heartily for having accepted our invitation. I desire to express my thanks and gratification to the whole of your colleagues on account of your having come here to see us. That is all I have to say at present. I have also to thank you for referring your Native Land Bill to us for consideration. There will be no real work done to-day ; it is only a day of greeting. The real work rests with you, because we, the Native people, are an ignorant and foolish people. It is for you to teach us what to do. It is for you to tell us what is right.

Hon. Mr. Ballance : My friends, the Native people, it gives me great pleasure to meet you on this occasion. When I received your invitation to be present at this great meeting of the Native tribes I was pleased, because I saw that it gave me an opportunity of meeting you face to face and discussing those matters of interest to both races. I am all the more pleased because of the great number of tribes which are here represented. In fact, I may say that this is the most gratifying address that I have ever received from any portion of the Natives in this Island. It gives me pleasure also to meet you for another reason. We are now inaugurating a new year, and therefore I take the opportunity of wishing you not only a happy new year, but that the year 1886 may be a prosperous one to the Native people. I thank you very much for the sentiments that you have expressed towards the Government, of which I am a representative. Of course I only expected those sentiments of loyalty which you have expressed towards the Queen. The day is not far dis-

tant, in my opinion, when all the Natives of New Zealand will be united as one man in their attachment to the Queen's throne. I believe that even Tawhiao himself has come round to acknowledge the supremacy of the Queen. We may differ on many questions, but there is great hope for us if we can agree on the one question of loyalty and patriotism. Then, again, I take it that your friendly sentiments towards the Government and myself have been created by services which you acknowledge we have rendered to the Native people. We have had great difficulties to encounter, but I am sure that you will all admit that during our tenure of office we have made an earnest attempt to reconcile the different interests amongst the Native people, and to make them feel that the institutions and Government of the country exist for them as well as for the Europeans. I state sincerely that it has been my earnest desire to make the laws so acceptable to the Native people that they could come under them as one man. I know that the land question is the greatest of all questions to the Maoris, and it is right that we should discuss that question fully. Now, I believe that no laws should be made affecting the Native people without being in the first instance brought before them, so that they might discuss them and say whether they would be for their benefit or not. The time was when laws were made by the Europeans for the Native people—and I believe that the intentions of the Europeans in so making those laws were good—but I say this, that no laws can be satisfactory unless, before being embodied in the law, they be approved by the Natives themselves. It was for that reason that I had a copy of the Native Land Bill circulated amongst the Maoris last session before it was submitted to Parliament, and now I have come before you to discuss that Bill in all its parts, and to ask your opinion upon it. Reference has been made to an old custom, observed by the late Sir Donald McLean, of visiting the Natives in their various settlements. I think it a good and wholesome custom, and so long as I have the honour to be Native Minister I shall try to follow that example. It has been said by an English writer that this is the age of discussion, but the age of discussion existed with the Maori people even before it existed amongst the English people. The Natives never came to any great resolution without having thoroughly discussed it, and, in my opinion, that custom of discussing great questions relating to their welfare accounts for the high intelligence of the Native people, which is admitted by every writer and thinker. Well, now this is really a Maori custom that I am trying to observe. I wish to discuss thoroughly amongst ourselves every measure which it is intended to introduce into Parliament which may affect the Native race. I have now only to repeat that it has given me great pleasure to meet you here on this occasion. I thank you once more for the kindly sentiments you have expressed, and I wish you all a happy new year.

Henare Matua : I am not addressing myself to the Native Minister, but wish to speak to the Natives. I wish to express my gratification at what the Minister has said, and his promise that the Maoris should be allowed an opportunity of discussing all questions in which they are interested. This is the first time that this opportunity has been afforded us. I wish to express my loyalty to the Queen, and my gratification to the Native Minister and to all the members of his Government. He is the Native Minister in reality, and not only in name. [Song.] Long life to the Queen and to the Native Minister, and may the words you have spoken live for ever.

Hoani McIhana te Rangiotu : I also wish to express my gratification to the Native Minister for having come here. I am speaking on behalf of Rangitane.

The meeting was then adjourned to the 5th January.

On reassembling, *Renata Kawepo* said : I wish to greet you, Mr. Ballance, for having responded to our invitation to come here and meet us. I now ask you to make a speech and explain your sentiments to us. We have been discussing the Bill for the last two days, and have not yet come to any conclusion. That is why we are anxious to learn your views on the subject.

Hon. Mr. Ballance : My friends, the Native people, I have first of all to thank you for your very cordial greeting. I responded willingly to the invitation to meet you, because I think it the duty of the Native Minister, in matters of great importance, to take the Native people into his confidence. Renata has said that you have not yet arrived at a conclusion with regard to the Bill. It is true that it is not a small matter, as Renata says, because it affects your land, and I am not surprised that you have not yet arrived at a conclusion upon so great a subject. Let me first of all explain what the history of this Bill is. In 1884 the question arose whether the Government were going to bring in some Bill to deal with Native lands. We replied that we were going to bring in such a Bill—that we would bring in a Bill in the following session dealing with the question; and the reason we made the promise was this: we were aware, from the expression of opinion on the part of the Natives in all parts of New Zealand, that the present state of the law affecting their lands was not satisfactory. The session passed over, and during the recess I visited various tribes at their own settlements. I regret that I was not able to visit all, but I visited as many as time permitted. Now, wherever I went I explained the principles of the Bill which we intended to introduce; and I may say that generally they were favourable to the principles. I promised to circulate the Bill before the session. Since the Government agreed upon the Bill I had it circulated. We asked the various Government agents throughout New Zealand to explain to the people the principles and provisions of the Bill. We received from various chiefs in different parts of the colony letters and telegrams respecting the measure. Some of these were favourable to the Bill, and some were not favourable. I read these letters to the House, and explained from whom they came, and I stated then, what I believe is true, that the great preponderance of opinion was undoubtedly favourable to the measure. However, when the Bill was introduced I found that some of your members were not favourable to it in all its parts. And here let me say that the whole of the Native members took the keenest possible interest in the measure. They spent a great deal of time in considering its provisions, and suggested a very large number of amendments. They also informed me that they did not think that justice would be done to the Bill in the House, and, in order that the Bill might be fully considered, I agreed to refer it to the Native Affairs Committee, the four Maori members being on this Committee. When the Bill was before the Committee we summoned witnesses, and took a great deal of evidence. In fact, I may say that

nearly two months were spent in taking evidence upon the Bill. Some of that evidence was of a very valuable nature, and threw much light on the provisions of the measure. At the same time Mr. Wi Pere suggested a number of amendments, while Te Puke te Ao and Wahanui drew up some amendments of their own. I ventured myself also to suggest some amendments. Now, there was no time for the Bill to pass through last session, because the evidence was taken up to within four or five days of the end of the session; and so the Committee agreed that the evidence and Bill, with the amendments suggested by the Maori members and by myself, should be printed, with the object of having the measure further considered next session. I have mentioned these matters so that you may see that I have adopted every means in my power to make the Native people fully informed with regard to this important Bill. You will now be convinced that there has been no attempt to pass in the dark a measure so closely affecting your interests. We have sought to have the fullest light thrown upon the Bill; and with that object I am here before you to-day. I do not begrudge any time spent in considering this measure, so long as we are likely to take a step in advance; for my opinion is that in this matter we cannot afford to stand still. You have seen large tracts of your land passing away from you into the hands of speculators, and you have derived very little benefit from the transactions. It fact, it appears to me that the best and most frugal man in the tribe is very much at the mercy of the most extravagant men. It has long been my opinion, therefore, that something should be done to place larger powers in the hands of the Natives themselves, and, at the same time, that what is done may be for the benefit of both races. If that object can be brought about then you will have the assistance of the best Europeans in the colony to place upon the Statute-book measures which will be for your lasting benefit. I shall say nothing about the opposition to the Bill, but I have no doubt that you have been informed by your members and by others that there was very fierce opposition to this Bill. But I will say this: that I think the opposition came entirely from those Europeans who have been for a long time living by speculations in Native lands. Now, the question which we have to consider with regard to the Bill is this: What does the Bill do? We may differ upon this point, but I will tell you what my intention is, and I will also say at the same time that I think that the Bill, with the amendments suggested, will carry out that intention. In one word, the intention of the Bill is to place in the hands of the owners of the land, through their Committees, absolute power to control the disposition of the land by sale or lease. It does not place in the hands of the Committees absolute power; if it had done so there would have been this danger: that the Committee would have been very much in the position of the ten trustees in their absolute control over the land. The Committee is subject to the veto of the owners, who elect it. The owners may at any time have the Committee dissolved by a majority of two-thirds. Any owner of land who is not on the Committee may have his own share of land cut out, and not dealt with by the Committee. It has been said that the best men may not be elected to the Committee, but, even supposing that the best men are not elected, still every man is protected because he can have his own share of the land cut out and not dealt with by the Committee at all; and here I am bound to say that this provision was not originally in the Bill, but was suggested by Mr. Wi Pere and by Mr. Carroll, and after considering the matter I thought it was only right, and proposed it myself as one of the amendments. Now, I have told you what the main principle of the Bill is—namely, to place the control of the land entirely in the hands of the owners of the land, and I am sure that no Maori can possibly object to that principle. It may be said that the Bill does not do that, but I am prepared to argue the question with any person who says that, and to show that it does do that. I am not prepared to say that the Bill is perfect. No Bill is perfect until the minds of all the people who are interested in the question have been fully informed, and have been expressed. For instance, my own opinion—arrived at since last session—is that possibly we can do without the Boards: so long as the local Committees have perfect control the Board is not required. Now, objection has been taken to the powers given in the Bill to the Governor in Council; but if you come to look into this matter you will see that the power given to the Governor in Council is absolutely necessary to enable the machinery of the Bill to work. I say, deliberately, that no important measure that has been passed in recent years gives less power to the Governor in Council than this Bill does. This is the power that it gives: the Governor may make such rules and regulations as he may think fit for the better enabling of this Bill to be given effect to; for we have found by experience that after Acts are passed some hitch may occur which would prevent the working of the Act unless there were a provision of this kind. I may say at once that I agree with most of the amendments which have been proposed by Wi Pere and Puke te Ao. There is, however, one amendment which I think will have to be discussed between us. It is proposed in the Bill that there shall be a reduction of 5 per cent. for management, and a sum for the cost of surveys and roads. Now, my own opinion is that 5 per cent. is a reasonable amount to pay for the cost of managing the Native lands under the Bill, and that no one ought to object to it. No commission agent will manage European lands for less than 5 per cent., and you ought to be as willing to pay that small amount for the management of the lands as to have them managed free. Then, with regard to the cost of surveys and of roads, I would put this to you: lands cannot be disposed of unless they are first surveyed and some kind of roads made to them, but the amount to be expended in roads and surveys might be left to the Committee, and the Committee might agree with the Commissioner what proportion of money should be taken out of the proceeds of the land for these purposes. Passing on from that, there are provisions in the Bill called remedial clauses, which give the Commissioner power to lease the land for fourteen years where Europeans have obtained possession of the land without any legal title; and then, again, there are provisions with regard to restrictions, and so on. I do not think that these should form part of the Bill, and I am prepared to cut these portions out. In fact, I am not myself anxious that they should be embodied in any legislation. I should like to say one word with regard to restrictions. I have always considered that restrictions were placed on land to prevent the land from being alienated from the Native people. During the administration of my predecessor a great many restrictions were lifted in order that the land might be sold, but since I have been in

office I have not lifted one single restriction except for the purpose of leasing, and do not intend to do so until a thorough inquiry has been made into the whole of the circumstances attending the sale of the land. I have now touched upon all the important parts of the Bill, but there may be many matters of which you will require an explanation, for I have not heard your discussion, and am not aware of the objections which you have taken to the Bill. The points to which I have referred you may not have noticed, and other points to which I have not referred may be, in your opinion, the important matters for consideration. I have heard that some objection has been taken to the name of the Bill—to the word “disposition.” If you can suggest a better name, I shall be only too glad to adopt it. Now, I should like to say one word before I conclude, because I should like to give an opportunity to those who object to the Bill or may not have received as full an explanation as they require with regard to the conduct of the four Native members in the House; for I have heard that those members have been severely censured by some people. I know why they were censured by some members of the House, and that was because they all combined to support the Government, and it was said that this was the first time they had all combined to support the Government. I suppose they supported the Government because they thought it was a good Government. You will perhaps be able to form a more impartial opinion on that point than I am. But this I will say, from my own knowledge, that no men could have devoted more time and attention to matters of Native interest than the four Maori members did during last session and the session before. No European members ever were more faithful to your interest than your own members were. I believe that that is the opinion of every man in the House. Of course, personally, I feel very grateful to them for another reason, because they have always treated me with great kindness and consideration, and therefore I only speak what I feel in the matter. Now, there are other matters outside the Bill, but I will not go into them at present, and am not going into them at all unless they are raised, because I do not know whether you wish me to touch on subjects outside of the Bill. I will now conclude by asking some of my friends to touch upon those points which they think of the greatest importance to the Maori people; and this I would like to say, in conclusion, that it is not my object to press this Bill upon the people. The Government, in taking charge of this Bill, have to face enormous difficulties. If you do not think that the Bill is for your welfare it is your duty at once to reject it. In one word, it is as much the Bill of the Native people as it is of the Government. I have done for the present.

Henare Tomoana : I am gratified at your having come to see us to-day, and for the patient way in which you have waited until we were ready to meet you, and also for the opportunities you have given us of discussing this important matter. I shall now explain what the views of the various tribes are with regard to this Bill. I can only speak of the matter with which I am perfectly conversant. I shall speak of the troubles under which the Natives labour with regard to the legislation that affects them. When the Native Land Court was constituted it was decided that no more than ten persons should have their names inserted in the Crown grant. It was clearly stated that those ten persons should be in the position of trustees, and the people acquiesced. After this, great trouble came upon the Natives. Then another Native Land Act was passed. The Natives were told that this Act was to be a good one, and for the benefit of the people and for their children hereafter. Only evil resulted from it. The Natives have been told as each successive Land Act was passed that it was for the Natives, but there has been only one result—evil has come upon the Native people. When I was a member of Parliament a law was passed to prevent the indiscriminate alienation of Native lands. Up to the present time, and particularly now in this new year, the Natives are living in the most peaceful state over the whole of New Zealand. This is why the Natives think that it is only right that they should give this Bill their most serious consideration. I am very much gratified with the explanation you have given us of your views; my heart is very thankful. I am very glad that you have afforded the Natives an opportunity of discussing this Bill, and also on account of your having come here personally to assist us in our deliberations. It is not a new wish of ours to meet the Native Minister face to face and discuss matters with him. It has been a fervent wish of ours for many years, but it is only now that our wish has been gratified. It must not be thought that the Natives are indifferent to this matter; they are discussing and considering it with their whole strength; they are endeavouring to come to some decision regarding it. I was glad to hear you say that you would be happy to receive any suggestions from the Natives. I also wish to express my thanks for your having agreed to strike out certain clauses in this Bill; you have not waited for this meeting to express its disapproval of those clauses, but you have voluntarily agreed to strike them out. Now that you have made your statement I hope you will wait patiently and discuss this Bill, because it is only by a joint discussion that we can arrive at a satisfactory conclusion. There are no troubles existing at the present time like the troubles that existed a short time ago. We are living now in a state of peace and quietness. I hope you will listen patiently to what we have to say, and return here again to-morrow if necessary, because we shall continue going on with this work, and perhaps we may be able to come to a final decision. After I sit down one of our number will get up and explain what our views are.

Mr. James Carroll : Salutations to you, the Native Minister. To my mind, your coming here is a satisfactory proof that you have the welfare of the Natives at heart; and, even if there are no good results from it, it can never be laid to your charge that you did not do your best. As you have given your explanation of the Bill, I will now reply, and state what our thoughts are respecting it. I would first state that this is the third day that this meeting has been engaged in discussing the provisions of the Bill, and on account of the difficulty of some of these clauses they have not yet come to a decision. We have been discussing the provisions of the measure, and I will now explain the resolutions we have arrived at so far. The meeting has come to the conclusion that the present title to the Bill should not be adopted. Secondly, the meeting has come to the conclusion that there should be no Land Board. Thirdly, that no power should be given to the Public Trustee, who is mentioned in the Bill; and the large powers given to the Commissioner and to the Governor in

Council should be expunged from the Bill. There has been a discussion about the Native Land Court, but that discussion has not been completed yet; that subject has been adjourned for the present. These are the subjects which have been discussed so far by the meeting. I shall now give my own individual views regarding this Bill. I object to certain principles in it, because they do not accord with my views. Possibly, however, it can be altered to suit. I do not attach much importance to the title of a Bill. I think that the main point is the matter it contains—the meaning of the various clauses; but I think that the objection made to the Board is a legitimate one; there is no reason for having that Board; I think that the Commissioner will be quite sufficient. I do not think it would be for the benefit of the Natives to retain the Board. I think that, if the Board is to be placed in a superior position to the Committee, your wishes that this Act may be for the good of the Natives will not be carried out. The one point that the Natives insist upon is to have the absolute disposal of their lands. If the Board is done away with, the Natives will then have a more direct control over their land. Now, with regard to the Committee, the Natives have many reasons for being extremely cautious about the powers they give to the Committees. There should be some very clear provision inserted in the Bill, which would enable the owners to direct the Committees what to do, lest the Committee should act as the ten trustees in the grant acted, who pay no heed whatever to the desire of the owners. It may be that, when an election of a Committee takes place, some will approve of the election and others will oppose it; but the Bill provides that the majority carry the day, and that the minority have to give way. Now, this difficulty would be met if you could suggest some machinery for cutting off the portion belonging to the dissenting owners. If there is only one dissentient the course would be quite clear; but it might happen that there are ten. Are they to have a separate Committee to administer their ten interests, or what is to be done? What are the ten dissentients who have their interests cut off to do? How are they to administer their land? It is true that there is a provision in this Bill which states that, if the owners in a block happen to be less than eight, it will still be legal for them to elect a Committee. My own private opinion is that, where the owners of a block are less than eight, it would be quite superfluous to have a Committee elected, because you may say that that land is individualized, the number of owners is so small. In my opinion, the principle of having Committees is only meant to apply to blocks where there are a great number of owners, so as to facilitate the dealing with such lands. However, the meeting is in favour of having Committees. I shall now speak of the clauses relating to the deduction of a certain amount for expenses. Perhaps it is only right that 5 per cent. should be deducted for paying expenses, but it should be considered that Native lands already pay very heavy taxes, which ought to be quite sufficient; and if 5 per cent. is deducted from these lands a corresponding reduction should be made in the heavy duties that the Maori lands have to contribute. The Natives now have to pay 10 per cent. on the value of any lands sold or leased. It is true that the Natives do not pay that money directly, but it is deducted from the price of the land. Then, again, rates are imposed on Native lands. Could not a reduction be made in these rates? With regard to the deduction of a certain amount for the cost of surveys, the Natives are now in the habit of paying for surveys themselves. They also pay the Court fees fixed by the Court for the adjudication of their lands. I think it would be a good thing if these clauses could be expunged from the Act, because they create distrust in the hearts of the Natives. I cordially indorse what you have said with regard to the removal of restrictions from Native lands; and I earnestly hope that the Government will consider this matter very carefully, and take into consideration also the question of sending a Commission to all Native districts, and making permanent reserves for the Natives. I think that the objections raised by the Natives to the large powers taken by the Governor in Council under this Bill are not unreasonable, although you have explained that not nearly such large powers are reserved to the Governor in this Bill as in some others. That may or may not be the case. These are my ideas with regard to the Bill. I think that we ought to come to some mutual understanding as to what is best to be done. The thing to be considered is whether we shall adopt this Bill as it is, or some other measure. This Bill has been given to us because it is considered an improvement on the Acts passed formerly; but we should consider whether this is so. I indorse what Henare Tomoana said about the evils that have resulted from former laws. It is perfectly true that, under the law which provided that only ten persons could have their names in the grants, mortgages and other transfers were legalized which resulted in the land passing away from the people. Then, with regard to the next law that was passed, which provided that no more than ten persons should have their names in the grant, and that the names of the other owners should be registered on the back of the certificate; it was thought that this law was devised in the interests of the Natives; but it was found that these ten persons appropriated the whole of the proceeds, and there were no means by which the registered owners could bring them to book. That law was altered; and a law passed subsequently provided that the whole of the owners should have their names inserted in the certificate or memorial of ownership. Many of the former evils have been remedied; that is to say, the provision whereby only ten persons were placed in the grant was replaced by the Act of 1867, by which the bulk of the owners were registered. Also mortgages and such transfers have been made illegal. Another Act that has been passed for the benefit of the Natives is the Native Lands Frauds Prevention Act, which provides that before a man can sell or lease his land the Trust Commissioner is to make full inquiries. In my opinion, the Natives are protected to this extent at present: every man who has an interest in a piece of land can have his name put in the certificate; and every man is protected by the Native Lands Frauds Prevention Act. They are also protected by a provision of the law which says that it is illegal to buy land until three months after it has passed the Court. Would it not be well to add to the benefits which the Natives now enjoy by improving the present laws? Would that not be better than making a radical change? Which would be the better plan? I will not answer that myself. I think it is a point on which every man should speak for himself. Some say that if the present Native land laws were improved and amended many of the grievances now existing could be done away with. Some again say that if the Native Land Court were made to do

its work effectively, that would meet all present requirements—no difficulties would arise. Others say that the owners should all live in a state of communism on their lands; while many aver that the prosperity of the Natives depends upon their having the land individualized. It is only right that this meeting should consider all the aspects of the case. I thoroughly indorse what you have stated about the four Maori members. I can speak positively, because I was present in Wellington. They did their very best; and they gave us outsiders all possible assistance. You remarked that some complaint had been made against those four members, but those complaints have never reached me.

Hirini Taiwhanga : I greet you, the Native Minister, for having met the Natives here to-day. I have been deputed by my people, Ngapuhi, to come here and represent them, and also by the Waikato people. I approve of what you have stated—that those who object to the provisions of your Bill should stand up and state what their objections are. I stand up now to object to your Bill. I am speaking on behalf of my own tribe, Ngapuhi, and on behalf of Waikato also. After I have discussed your Bill, I shall speak about a meeting called by Mr. Grace, which affects the land of the King Natives. Thirdly, I shall refer to the loan of ten millions proposed by Sir Julius Vogel. Fourthly, the troubles of the Maoris, and the absence of morality amongst them. It is the wish both of Ngapuhi and Waikato that the law should be made to carry out the spirit and letter of the Treaty of Waitangi and the English Constitution Act—that is to say, the 71st section of the Constitution Act—which I shall read in English. [Read 71st section of the Act.] It is the wish of the Natives that some law should be drafted to carry out the spirit of this Act which I have just read. I have here the draft of a Bill which embodies these principles. [He then read the draft.]

Wi Pere : It has already been explained to you that this meeting has arrived at nothing definite with regard to the Bill before it. Mr. Carroll has already stated several of the matters which this meeting has been considering, and which it has made up its mind upon. It is because we have not come to a decision that we are not able to state clearly to you now what our views are. We think that the Government should only attempt to do what the people wish, and should not try to do more than carry out the wishes which the people have expressed. I think that the powers of the Governor should be more clearly defined. The Bill provides that the Governor may do certain things by Order in Council. This would cause a considerable amount of distrust. I shall now speak, Sir, about my own district, extending from Gisborne up to Waiapu. I speak with absolute certainty about that district, because I am well acquainted with it. The people in that district are still selling land; and if they go on at this rate, in two years from now, in my opinion, they will have no land left—that is, unless some Act is brought into force to restrain them from selling in this manner. From my place in Parliament I urged that some law should be passed immediately to restrain the people from disposing of the land. You, Sir, went to Gisborne and met the Natives there, and they made a request that you would take some steps to prevent the alienation of the land. Notwithstanding their having made that request to you, this last year the people have sold thirty or forty thousand acres of land. Now, with regard to the Frauds Prevention Act, I have never seen the good of that Act at all, because it is not until after the land is absolutely sold that inquiry is made. That is the fault of the Trust Commissioners. The Trust Commissioners do not see the Native sellers sign the deeds—they are not signed in their presence. These signatures are taken before Justices of the Peace and people at other places; and then, after the land is sold, documents are produced, and the Natives are asked to certify whether they held the land for themselves or for others; also whether they were paid in money or warlike stores; and the Commissioner, seeing that the Natives have signed these documents, signs the deed as a matter of course. These documents often state what is false; they state that the land is not being held for the benefit of others, which is quite contrary to the fact. As a matter of fact, the land thus disposed of is often held in trust for minors. It is here that I think the Trust Commissioners fail in their duty. This state of things is still continuing. If the Trust Commissioner would only make his inquiries before the land is absolutely disposed of, there would be some sense in it; but, as I have said, these inquiries are never made until after the land is sold; and, if objections are made then, it is no use, for the time has passed by for making them. I only allude to these matters because the wish of the meeting is that the only duty of the Committees shall be to give effect to the written wishes of the people—that the Committees should only act on the written instructions of the owners. They should not act in the same manner as the ten grantees, who used to act quite independently of the owners; and, again, the Committees should not behave in the same manner as some of the owners acted under the Act of 1867, when the bulk of the owners were not in a position to state how the land should be managed. If any trust had been imposed by the grant, then these ten grantees would not have been able to sell the land belonging to the tribe; or, if there was any machinery to compel the ten trustees to share the money properly with all the owners, it would have been well. The unanimous wish of the people in my district is to prevent single individuals from selling the land; so that, if the land is to be sold, it should be done by all the people, and not by one individual. If the present state of things is allowed to continue and the present bad laws remain in force, in a short time there will be no land left to the Natives. It is the sincere wish of the people in my district that the administration of the land should be in the hands of the owners of the soil, and it is for them to make known to the Government what they wish done—not for the Government to tell them what to do. The Government should not take away any of the authority that the Natives hold over the land. Now, as to your request that if we have any objections to the Bill we should make them known, I wish to ask, how can single Natives be prevented from selling the land? We are in favour of Committees being elected to manage the various blocks; we are altogether in favour of that idea; but there are certain objectionable clauses which we wish to be expunged, and better clauses substituted. Now, if we oppose this Bill altogether and refuse to accept it, what is to prevent the present evil from being continued? I shall not speak at length, or allude to the clauses seriatim, because the Bill is still under discussion by the Natives.

Te Puke te Ao: We have not finished discussing the provisions of this Bill, as you have already been informed. I now wish to ask you whether you are agreeable to have this meeting adjourned till to-morrow, and thus give us an opportunity to go further into the matter and finish our discussion. I do not think that any person should get up in this meeting and state his own individual opinions, unless those opinions have been previously discussed by the meeting. This meeting is composed of people who have come from great distances. If we adjourn till to-morrow we shall then be able to let you have our decision.

Hon. Mr. Ballance: I think Mr. Te Ao's proposal to adjourn the discussion till to-morrow is a very good one, and if it is the wish of the meeting I will agree to that proposal. I can see from what Mr. Carroll said that the discussion up to the present time has been productive of much good, and, when the meeting has arrived at some definite conclusion as to the subjects on which he has touched, I shall have something to say. I shall also make some remarks with regard to Mr. Taiwhanga and his proposal for "Home rule." Now, I would like to say one word about another question, but before I explain the matter I would ask you not to mix this question up with the others, but discuss it after you have done the others. The question is the Maori franchise. You have four members in the House as you are aware, and no doubt you would like to have increased representation. I am bound to inform you that my own opinion is that Parliament will not add to the number of Maori members in the House, or to that of European members either; but there is a power which the Maori people may exercise that they never yet have exercised to any extent. They have the power now of voting for European members, or, in some districts where the Maoris are very powerful, they may put in Maori members. Now, I will explain to you what this franchise is: Every Maori who pays a rate to the Road Board or to the County Council or to the Town Council may have a vote, and every person who has twenty-five pounds' worth of land in his own right may have a vote. I think that where there is plenty of land in a district there is nothing to prevent the people from having the land divided, and so getting votes. And this is my opinion: that the Maori people will never have that influence in this country that they are entitled to have until they avail themselves of this power. I shall leave this matter now to your consideration, and accept the proposal of *Te Puke te Ao* that we should adjourn till to-morrow.

The meeting was resumed on the 6th January, when *Renata Kawepo* said: I wish to express my gratification at the patience you have displayed, Mr. Ballance, in waiting here day after day. I also thank you for your kind intentions towards the Native people, and for your earnest endeavours to do what is best for the Native race. I thank you very sincerely for what you have done in this respect. I am all the more thankful to you because I believe that people from a distance have been making slighting remarks as to the policy you have adopted with regard to the Natives. I do not know whether such is the case, but if it is I am perfectly indifferent.

Henare Matua said: Welcome, Mr. Ballance. My heart is rejoiced at your coming here to see us to-day. I welcome you and those associated with you. It is only right that you should show us some consideration, because we are all living under the Queen's laws. You hold the authority over us because you are called the Native Minister. Your action in submitting the Bill to the Natives for consideration is quite right. That is all. Long life to yourself and to the Queen, and prosperity. May God protect us all. Salutations to you.

Tiaki Tai, of Waimarama, said: I welcome you on behalf of all the people assembled here. When Sir Donald McLean was Native Minister it was his custom to go and see the people, but no Minister since has followed in his footsteps, except yourself. You have submitted your Native Land Disposition Bill to us, and we have had an opportunity of considering it, and your object in coming here to-day is to discuss it with us. I hope that you will not be deterred by any slighting remarks that may have been made about your coming here to see us. I wish you prosperity, and thank you for having come here.

Wi Waka Rangiwakaewa, from Wairarapa, said: Welcome, Mr. Ballance, welcome. Come and see us and advise us what to do. Help us to remove the evil resting on the Native people. You have come here to bring us peace and prosperity. When you took office you found many troubles resting upon the Maori people; but you have brought the light in upon them. We hope that during the time that you and your Government are in office you will dispel all gloom. The people all rejoice, and are very glad at your having come here to make us unanimous in searching after what is best for ourselves.

Hikawera, from Wairarapa, said: I welcome you, the Native Minister, to this meeting. This meeting is composed of representative men from various parts of the Island. You have added *éclat* to the meeting by coming personally. This is as it should be. I am very grateful to you for having come. It is only right that you should come here to listen to our sentiments, and assist us as you are doing. My heart is rejoiced that you have done this, because it carries out the opinion that we had previously formed, that yours is a good and just Government. Your Government have given the Maoris an opportunity for the first time of discussing legislation affecting them and their land. I desire to express my thanks to the Premier, Mr. Stout, and to the Governor, and to the whole of your colleagues also for their policy in regard to the Maoris,

Rongowhitiaau, from Rotorua and Waikato, said: Salutations to you, the Minister for the Native people. I come from the middle of the Island. It was on account of your Native Land Disposition Bill having been distributed amongst the Natives that I came to this meeting. My friends, the chiefs of this district, invited me to come here so that we might discuss some policy which would be for our mutual benefit. I am very glad that you have come here to take part in our deliberations. We are all met together here under the law of the Queen, and in support of peace and good-will. We have arrived at a definite conclusion with regard to some of the provisions of the Native Land Disposition Bill; but others we have not been able to come to a decision upon. I ask you to give effect to the resolutions that we have arrived at, because they embody the wishes of the Native people, and will be the means of bringing prosperity to them,

Raniera te Heuheu, of Te Wairoa, said : Welcome, Mr. Ballance, and all your companions. I am very grateful to you for your patience in waiting here while this meeting has been going on. I met you last year at the Native meeting at Gisborne, and remember your words on that occasion. The words you then spoke brought gladness to our hearts. I came here to represent the Natives of my district, to act on their behalf in discussing your Bill. There will be a number of meetings held in my district during the present year, at Wairoa and Gisborne; and, as this will be a great season for birds, I ask that we may be permitted to buy more ammunition than is at present allowed. The reason that I make this request now is that these meetings that I speak of are depending for food upon obtaining birds. The meetings will be called for the purpose of building churches and meeting-houses.

Hori te Tuki, from Wairarapa : I wish long life to the Queen, to the Parliaments of New Zealand and England, I wish prosperity and health to Mr. Stout, the Premier of New Zealand, and to you, Mr. Ballance, and also to your companions. I express these wishes to you on account of the great love and consideration you have shown to the Maori people. You have given many proofs of your kindly feelings towards us. Even if you and your Government should hereafter be defeated, what will it matter? You have done your duty, what you thought was best for us. We shall thank you for your intentions, even if you do not accomplish what you are attempting. I came here to represent my people at this meeting, and to discuss the provisions of the Bill you have distributed amongst us.

A song in honour of the Native Minister was here sung.

Wi Pewhairangi, of Tolago Bay : I greet you, Mr. Ballance. I come from the twelve districts of Ngatiporou. I am the representative of the people living on the East Coast. I was deputed by them to attend this meeting. I thank you for coming here and waiting in the most patient manner day after day. Seeing that you have visited most of the centres of Maori population, I hope you will visit the people of Waiapu and the adjacent settlements, so that all our little children and old men and women may have an opportunity of seeing you. I am glad that you have the welfare of the Natives thoroughly at heart, and I hope that you will take charge of the petitions and all the grievances that we send to Parliament, and that you will be supported in ventilating our grievances by the four Native members. And if your Government go out of office we shall always be able to look back and see that they have done their best for the Maori people. God save the Queen!

Anaru te Kahaki, of Waiapu : I greet you, Mr. Ballance, and your associates. Your having come to see us is a proof of your kindly feeling towards us; you have made yourself one with us in coming here and meeting us day after day and listening to what we have to say. I shall be able to go back to my own people and tell them what you have said to us. Your friends, the Native chiefs of this district, invited me to come here. I now ask that you will come and visit Waiapu and the East Coast, so that the people in those distant places may meet you. I hope that you and your colleagues will be strong in doing what you think is best for the Native people. I shall give you all the encouragement in my power in your endeavour to advance us. Long life to you and your colleagues, and to the Queen.

Hoani Meihana te Rangiotu, of Palmerston : I want to express my sense of pleasure at having met all the Native chiefs here. I look upon this meeting as a thoroughly representative one, as it comprises delegates from all the tribes. I greet you, the Native Minister, and also the Under-Secretary, Mr. Lewis. It is very good of you to come and listen to what we have to say. It is for you to deal as you think best with the resolutions arrived at by this meeting. We will state shortly what has been done, and it will be for you to reply and say what you think about our efforts. You are the first Native Minister who has treated us in the same way as Sir Donald McLean, who, no matter how he was engaged, would lay aside his other work and go and see the Natives; and I hope you will consider it right to go about all over the Island and see the Natives. If you do this it will be a proof of your having their welfare really at heart. I am now going to sing you a song. [Song.]

Hirini Taiwhanga, from the Bay of Islands : I thank you very heartily for having come here to see us. There are two reasons which induce me to stand up now—first, I ask you to support very strongly the Bill a copy of which I gave you yesterday, because before the next session of Parliament I am going to submit it to a lawyer, and have it drafted ready to be brought before Parliament. I shall place it in the hands of members of Parliament; and I hope, Sir, that, if you have any love for the people of this Island, you will strongly support my Bill. The second matter to which I wish to allude is this: I hold in my hand a letter from the King Natives asking that you, Sir, will write a letter to Mr. Grace, and to the Natives associated with him, asking him to cease from making the survey. This letter also asks that you will communicate with the Europeans who are about to prospect in the King country, telling them to stop their operations. I said yesterday that I came here as a representative of Ngapuhi, and also of the Natives living in the district from which this letter has been sent. I support the request contained in this letter—namely, that the survey which Mr. Grace is making may be stopped, and also the prospecting for gold. Let that remain in abeyance until some good law has been passed which will be for the benefit of Natives and Europeans alike, because during the past years, down to the present time, we have had nothing but trouble. It is on account of past troubles that we are all the more urgent that some good law should now be passed which will do away with all the troubles that ever came upon us, and provide for all future troubles.

Henare Tomoana : I desire to thank you, Mr. Ballance, for the great patience you have displayed in waiting for us during the time this meeting has been progressing. I thank you on behalf of the representatives who have come to this meeting from their respective tribes. The people assembled here are representatives of the various tribes of New Zealand who are living under and acknowledging the laws of the Queen. None of these people are living outside the law of the Queen, and those who come after them will continue to live under and uphold the law. I shall allude now to what

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?

With regard to Ngapuhi I have had conversations with Mr. Hakuene, who was chosen at the last election to represent Ngapuhi in Parliament, and he is directly opposed to what Taiwhanga has said to-day. Now, whom am I to take as the representative of the Ngapuhi—the member who was elected by them or Hirini Taiwhanga? I do not say this in any bitterness; I am only pointing out to you that there may be a difference of opinion both amongst Waikato and Ngapuhi. I am glad to hear from our friend Raniera that it is going to be a fine season for birds, and I know that this is a matter of some importance. I am not inclined to treat it as a light matter. I know it is important that you should have sufficient ammunition to shoot birds when they are plentiful; and I consider that the state of the Native people is such that I can now give them further facilities to procure as much ammunition as they may require for this purpose, and a circular will be sent out instructing all officers to give every facility for the procuring of ammunition. I should like to say, in passing, that I consider this to be one of the most important representative meetings of the Native people of New Zealand that has ever been held. I greatly value and appreciate the opinions which have been expressed on all sides. Of course I may differ from some, and I hope I shall be able to explain clearly in what I differ from you. I believe that this meeting will do a great deal of good, because it will lead the Native people to discuss those questions which affect their welfare, hoping and knowing that the Government will be prepared to give them every reasonable attention. Before I sit down I have to allude to two requests which were made by Mr. Tomoana. With regard to the payment of duty in advance, I shall bring that subject before the Government, and I shall ask Sir Julius Vogel, the Colonial Treasurer, to try and devise some means to have the amount collected annually, instead of having the whole amount paid down. The reason the law was changed by the last Government was this: It was found that when the duty was collected annually a great portion of it was lost, so they said, "We will make the purchaser or lessee of Native land pay the whole amount down at once, deducting the interest." I think, however, we can devise some means which will prevent the Government from sustaining loss, and enable the duty to be paid annually. With regard to rates on unoccupied Native lands, this is a very different question. I opposed the Bill in Parliament when it was first introduced in 1880, and I have opposed it ever since; and I was very severely taken to task last session by members of Parliament for what I said to the Natives about this Bill. I have never thought that Native lands should be rated before they could be used by the people, or before they had passed through the Court. I shall always be prepared to support any measure for the repeal of that Act. I shall bring the request which you have made to-day before the notice of the Government. Once again I thank you very warmly for the kind sentiments which you have all expressed towards me.

Renata Kawepo: With regard to your statement about the representation of Waikato, there is no representative of Waikato present. There were two tribes which did not send any representatives to this meeting—Waikato was one, and Te Whiti's tribe was another. Taiwhanga said yesterday that he was the mouthpiece of Ngapuhi and Waikato. I believe he is a representative of Ngapuhi, but not of Waikato.

Rongowhiti: I should like to explain that Waikato sent no representative here. I might claim to be their representative but I do not. The only real representative that Waikato and Taranaki have at this meeting is their member, Puke te Ao.

Henare Tomoana: We have not been able to do all that we wished, that is, we have not discussed all the provisions of your Bill. The unanimous opinion of the meeting is that more power should be given to the Natives to administer their affairs. I will now inform you of the resolutions come to by the meeting. We desire to substitute another title for "The Native Land Disposition Bill," and wish the Bill to be intitled "A Bill to bring Prosperity to the Native Race." Secondly, we wish to have the Boards abolished. We wish to have all the clauses relating to the establishment of Boards struck out of the Bill. Now, concerning the Commissioner, the meeting has approved of Commissioners, and wishes to associate the Committee-men appointed under the Committees Act of 1883 with the Commissioner, so that they may work together. The meeting does not approve of the Public Trustee being introduced into the Bill at all, and it objects to all the clauses relating to the duties of the Public Trustee and the imposition of the 5 per cent. There are clauses in this Bill which provide that certain matters shall be relegated to the Native Land Court. We object to these clauses altogether, and ask that Native Committees may be substituted for the Native Land Court. These are the principal resolutions come to by the meeting. I hope that you will not feel hurt at these resolutions. This is the first time that the Natives have ever attempted to discuss a Bill affecting themselves, and I hope that you will not be displeased with the result. That is all I have to say with regard to the subjects dealt with by the meeting. Although copies of the Native Land Laws Consolidation Bill have not been sent to us for discussion at this meeting, I shall make some remarks with regard to it. It is the opinion of this meeting that the principles of that Bill are seriously antagonistic to the Natives; if passed it will bring great trouble upon them. I am not able at present to point out the several clauses which will bring trouble upon the Natives. I shall content myself with saying that it will do so. After having made this statement, I should like to ask you, for the information of the people, what your ideas are regarding that Bill. The Natives have had many proofs that ten persons have become unlawfully and wrongfully possessed of blocks of land. The Natives perceive that great trouble has arisen from the law which provided that not more than ten persons should be placed in the grant, and that the bulk of the owners should have their names registered on the back of the grant. This Bill proposes to validate all sorts of improper sales which took place in the past. No objection could be made to those which were carried on fairly, but we object to those in which signatures were obtained in publichouses and payments made in spirits. We object to such being validated. I will not say anything more about the Native Land Laws Consolidation Act. I have a certain amendment which I wish to bring before this meeting. It is drafted with the object of giving increased powers to the Native Committees, and further facilities for carrying on the business affecting the Native people. I will

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

Ngaiterangi, of Thames, separate Committees, so that there will be more tribal Committees to perform functions within the tribes. I will now refer to the Native Land Laws Consolidation Bill. That Bill professed to be a bringing together of the laws relating to Native land on the Statute-book. I am inclined to agree with Tomoana that a Bill of that kind should not contain validating clauses, validating titles which were imperfect. Of course, I agree that, where titles were obtained by drink, the Legislature should be very chary in touching those titles at all. I, for one, would not be a party to do anything which would tend to make titles of that kind perfect. But there are titles of a different character, flaws in which have arisen perhaps from some error in the Court or machinery, and these, I think, in all fairness should be validated. But I do not think that validating clauses are related to a Bill of that character, and it is my intention to take them out. With regard to that Bill I quite agree that the Natives should be in possession of the Consolidation Bill, just as much as in possession of the Native Land Disposition Bill. I will have that Bill also circulated during the recess. I hope that, if any objections are made to any of the clauses of that Bill, I may be informed of them as soon as possible. There is just one thing I should like to say before I come to the Bill under consideration, and it is this: It has been said that the Bill giving the power to ten persons to deal with the land was a very wrong measure, and it has also been said that every Bill that has been passed has been worse in the interests of the Native people; but I cannot agree with that, because this Bill putting in the ten persons was one of the first that was passed, and, if that Bill had not been repealed, in my opinion there would have been no land belonging to the Native people to-day—it would have all passed from them long since. Now I have to say that I am very glad of the result at which the meeting generally has arrived with regard to this present Bill, the so-called Native Land Disposition Bill, because I think that a great many of their objections are exceedingly reasonable, and that the course taken has been a very intelligent one, and, in my opinion, a very moderate one. Now, first of all, with regard to title. I do not attach much importance to that. There is very little in a name, and it would not signify much to the Native people whether it is called by this or by any other name; but I am quite prepared to accept the amendment proposed by the meeting. My difficulty is to get a short title that would be expressive. We might call it "The Native Land Bill," or "The Native Land Protection Bill," but at any rate I accept the opinion of the meeting, and if they can think of any name that will meet their views I shall be very happy to adopt it. In the meantime I will agree to call it the Native Land Bill, and explain that it is a Bill to bring prosperity to the Native race, or a Bill for the protection of Native lands. In regard to proposition No. 2, I agree to that; as I stated yesterday, I agree to abolish the Boards, so that is agreed upon. With regard to the Commissioners, I understand that the meeting wishes the district Committees to be brought in. I do not at present know whether they can be brought in, except, perhaps, in connection with proposition No. 6. However, if I can bring them in and make them useful, of course I shall do so. I have not studied the various ways in which they can be brought in. They had the power to select one member on the Board, but now that the Boards are abolished I must have time to consider how they can be made useful. Of course the Committees of the blocks are the main principle of the Bill, because they represent the owners of the land, and of course we are all agreed to retain them. I will now notice a remark made by Mr. Carroll yesterday—I do not know whether he was expressing the opinion of the meeting—that when the number was under eight there should be no Committee at all. Well, of course, when it comes down to one, I think that he should be his own Committee and manage his own land, and when the number is less than eight we might carry out Mr. Carroll's view with benefit, by subdividing the lands, so that each one would hold his own share. At present, of course, if the number is less than eight, the majority forms the Committee. I recognize that there is great force in Mr. Carroll's proposal, and I intend to give it serious consideration. Proposition 4 is that the Public Trustee is not to be introduced into the Bill. I have no particular liking for the Public Trustee being introduced into the Bill. In other matters I know that he has given me a good deal of trouble. I do not refer to the man, of course—I refer to the office; and I shall make other arrangements, and leave the Public Trustee out. Therefore I agree to No. 4. Now, with regard to the 5-per-cent. commission. I listened with great attention to what Mr. Carroll said on the subject yesterday. It is quite true that Native lands pay a very heavy duty in the 10 per cent. and in the duties under the Rating Act; but what Parliament would say would be this: that this money is for a different object, that it is a duty paid by the land for the title which is given to the land by the Courts of the colony. For it is well known that the fees of the Native Land Court do not pay the whole of the expenses of the Court. I do not agree with the rating, as I have told you, and I hope it will be repealed. I refer to rates upon land before it has passed the Court. I think, however, that you ought to agree to this reasonable amount, the 5 per cent. upon the land. I therefore differ from the conclusion at which the Committee have arrived upon that point, and I think that Parliament will expect that there shall be something paid for the management of your business, whether 5 per cent. or less. If you look at the amount which you pay for the management of your business, in any department you like, you will see that a shilling in the pound is a very small amount; but I will bring this matter before the Government, and I will represent to the Government what you say on the point, and it is possible that the Government may agree to make it $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. instead of 5 per cent., in consideration of the money which is paid in other directions. In connection with this subject, I would say, with regard to surveys and roads, that I am quite prepared to put in a clause to give the Committee the power of agreeing with the Commissioner as to what should be paid for surveys and roads; for I am afraid that, if there is no power to agree to pay money for roads to open up the land, and for surveys, the Bill will be a dead letter. I am also, as well as Native Minister, Minister of Lands; and in disposing of lands we do this: we have roads cut to open up the land before it is sold; the roads are merely cut, not metalled, and we find that the land brings a better price when the roads are so

made. I think that road-making is a matter of great importance; and therefore I urge it upon your attention. Now I come to No. 6. You wish that, when there is any dispute with regard to the proportions of money to be paid to Natives, the matter should not be relegated to the Native Land Court to decide, but to the Native Committees. I have been thinking over that matter very much, and I think that this would meet your objection: that the matter should first be referred to the district Committee; and if their decision is not such as to give satisfaction to the people, then they should have the right of appeal to the Native Land Court. Now I have gone over the whole of the six matters brought forward by Tomoana, and I hope the answers I have given are clear to you. Let me recapitulate. We are agreed about the title. We are agreed to abolish the Boards. I am prepared to bring in the district Committees to assist the Commissioner in the way I have stated with regard to the allocation of the money, and to consider whether in any other respect they can be introduced with benefit. With respect to No. 4, I will strike out the Public Trustee, and make other provisions which I hope will be satisfactory. With regard to the 5-per-cent. commission, it is my opinion that you should allow that to remain; but I will bring the matter before the Government and state your views to them. I will tell them all that Mr. Carroll has said about the other charges, and put it to them; and if they agree I shall be very glad. But what I am afraid of is this: that, when it comes before the House, the House will not agree to it at all. The House will say, "We are called upon to go to a great expense to pay Commissioners and to carry out the machinery for dividing and disposing of the land, and yet there is nothing paid for it by the Natives." I will tell you what occurred with regard to this question of commission in the case of the reserves of the West Coast Natives. When I went up amongst them I found that the demands of the Public Trustee, apart from surveys and roads, amounted to no less than 20-per-cent. commission. I told the Natives that I thought this was a preposterous thing, and that I would do all I could to reduce the charge; and I succeeded in getting it reduced to 6½ per cent., with which the Natives were quite content. Now I come to No. 6, and I have said that I intend to refer matters to the Native Committees before they are referred to the Land Court—I mean for the allocation of money. We have now discussed, I hope in a satisfactory manner, the various questions relating to this Bill. I have tried to place my views before you in as clear a form as I possibly can. You must not suppose that the carrying of this Bill through Parliament is an easy matter. It met with violent opposition last session from certain parties in the House who are well known to you. In my opinion it will meet with violent opposition next session, and I question whether we shall be able to carry the Bill until we have first had an appeal to the country; but, if I have the Native people with me, I shall never rest while I am in power until I have carried this Bill and placed it on the Statute-book—that is the one condition—I must have the people with me. Now, allow me to finally thank you. I presume that we shall close the business by this evening. I thank you for the very intelligent way in which you have discussed this matter. My great desire is to place the Natives in the way of helping themselves. I do not think that the Government should do everything for the people, and the people do nothing for themselves; for I am convinced that things will not be satisfactory until you take your affairs into your own hands, and know how to manage them. That is the reason that I am desirous of strengthening local self-government amongst you by giving you power to deal with your own affairs in your own way, after discussion, and by weakening that power which has brought, in my opinion, so much trouble upon you. I refer to the way that individuals are worked to induce them to sell land. There are some who believe that the best thing to do with the Native people is to take the whole of their lands from them and make them work. I was horrified to see such an opinion expressed by a Judge of the Native Land Court, who is now dead, and who professed to be a great friend of the Native people. I say that the Native people of New Zealand can never maintain their position unless they have sufficient land left for themselves. I shall now refer to a matter which Mr. Carroll mentioned yesterday. It appears to me to be a question of the greatest importance to the Native people—whether they are to continue to live amongst themselves in a state of communism, or, like Europeans, in houses of their own. My own opinion, after much thought upon the subject, is that the Natives will never be in a prosperous state—or even likely to be preserved—unless each man gets his own Crown grant and his own piece of land, and lives upon it as a European does upon his. For my part, I shall be satisfied when the day comes in which each Native in the Island will have his own Crown grant and his own piece of land. I now thank you for the great consideration you have shown me.

Tomoana: I indorse what you have stated, and thank you for your speech. I now ask you if you will agree to come to-morrow, that we may have further discussion on some of the points raised by you.

This was agreed to by the Hon. Mr. Ballance, and the meeting then adjourned.

7th January, 1886.

The meeting was resumed to-day, when *Henare Tomoana* said: I wish to refer to a statement in one of the newspapers that this meeting would not agree to any of the provisions of your Bill. This is a misrepresentation of what took place. It is false. I have not much to say to you on the present occasion; I only want to allude to several small matters. I will inform you what took place after you left the meeting yesterday. With regard to the 5-per-cent. deduction, you made a personal request that the meeting would support you in fixing that amount. The meeting has positively agreed to that deduction. That is the result of our deliberations last night—the 5 per cent. has been agreed to. Seeing that the meeting has agreed to the 5 per cent., we hope that you will see your way to make a reduction in the 10-per-cent. Native land duty. I am afraid that this imposition of rates on Native land will pass into a custom, and that there will be further rates placed on Native lands. Twenty-five per cent. is now deducted from Native lands: 10 per cent. for leasing or selling, 10 per cent. for rating, and this 5 per cent. I do not ask you to consent immediately to this request, but I ask you to bear it in mind, and to bring it before your colleagues, and see if anything

can be done. We, the chiefs of the Island, have given way and accepted your suggestion about the 5 per cent., and we hope that you will be able to do something for us in return, by having a reduction made in the duty. This is a matter which emanates from myself alone. There is a part of your speech about which I am not perfectly clear. What I asked yesterday was that the Chairmen of the Native Committees should be associated with the Commissioners. I understood you to reply that you agree that the Native Committees should be associated with or assist the Commissioners.

Hon. Mr. Ballance : Perhaps it would be as well for me to reply to what Tomoana has just said, so as to make the matter perfectly clear. I am very glad to hear that the meeting has agreed to the proposal contained in the Bill with regard to the 5 per cent., because it will greatly strengthen my hands when the Bill comes before Parliament. Tomoana has asked whether I am prepared to recommend a reduction in the Native land duty. There are two ways in which a change might be made for the better, so far as the Native people are concerned. A suggestion was made yesterday that, instead of the money being paid down all at once, we should return to the former custom of having it paid annually. The effect, in my opinion, of the money being paid down at once is to reduce the price or rent of the land. Of course you are aware that it is the purchaser or lessee of Native land that pays the duty ; but, in the case of rented land, if a man has to pay down a large sum at once—say, the whole of the duty for twenty-one years—he will very likely deduct the amount from the rent he pays to the Native owner, for the large sum is of course felt by him, and he makes a harder bargain with the owner of the land ; but I am inclined to think it is different when he only pays the 10 per cent. every year. In that case I think the Native can exact nearly if not quite as much rent as he could if there were no duty ; for this reason : the amount of the rent is governed by the number of people who wish to get the land. Besides, to pay a large amount of money down at once injures the lessee, who may be a small man without much money, and he may have a difficulty in getting so much money paid down, and therefore it reduces the number of competitors for the land. Having considered this question, I am prepared to urge strenuously that the request made yesterday by Tomoana should be complied with, and that the money should be paid annually. Then, with regard to the amount, I am inclined to think that 5 per cent., if the money is paid down at once, would be enough, and indeed that 5 per cent. would be enough any way ; and I am prepared to press that matter on the Colonial Treasurer and the Government as a concession to the Native people ; but I will say at once that I should very much like to see the Native Land Rating Act, which applies to lands which have not passed through the Court, repealed ; and I think it would be better for the Maoris to adhere to the 10 per cent. if they could get that Act repealed. The matter is this : it is not a question of what I or the Government are willing to do, it is a question of what Parliament will do ; and that is the reason I speak to you about getting greater power in Parliament that will enable you to carry through legislation. I feel convinced that if the Natives were to exercise the power they have under the law as it exists, in the way of placing themselves on the rolls, that they could get in reason whatever legislation they want ; because it will not then be only the four members who will be in the House, but they will be able to affect half the seats in the North Island, and in some instances they will actually be enabled, so strong are the Natives, to put in their own member. When that time comes you will have every European candidate coming to address the Native people, and making promises as to what he will do for them if he is returned to Parliament. That is my view of this question. I shall explain at another time how simple this matter is, if you will only take it up earnestly. Now let me explain about the Maori Committees—the Chairmen assisting the Commissioners—I said this might be brought about by referring the allocation of the money to the Committees instead of to the Native Land Court, and I promised to have the Land Court struck out and the Committees put in, but that the people should have the right of appeal to the Land Court if they were dissatisfied with the decision of the Committee. And then I said further that I would consider carefully in what other ways the Committees might be useful in assisting the Commissioner ; that matter I have not yet fully thought out, but I intend to give it a great deal of thought, and put it in the amended Bill, which I intend to submit to you before Parliament meets. I think the suggestion is a very excellent one, and I am perfectly sure that the Chairmen of Committees can render valuable assistance. Now, with regard to the misrepresentation in the newspaper report, I noticed that, and I was very much surprised at it. I cannot understand any man sitting down deliberately as a reporter, and conveying a wrong impression. I cannot believe that any man is so dishonest as to deliberately convey a wrong impression. It is a case of either stupidity or of dishonesty. However, I do not think it will do any harm, except that it gives the Europeans a wrong impression altogether with regard to what the Natives have done ; but I have got my own report, which will be a correct one, and I shall take care that the right impression goes forth. I have now touched on the various matters referred to by Tomoana, and perhaps it will be convenient if I wait until some other speaker has expressed his views before I say anything further.

Mr. James Carroll : With regard to the newspaper misrepresentations I agree with what you said yesterday that if you were influenced by such statements you would not be fit for the office of Native Minister. It is quite true that his meeting did object to a number of the provisions of the Bill as it was brought before Parliament, and the object of this meeting has been to improve the Bill and suggest amendments. I thank the Native Minister for the explanation he has given us regarding the 10-per-cent. Native duty and the imposition of rates on Native lands. It is quite true that if the 10-per-cent. duty is to be paid in advance there will be a reduction in the rent of Native land, but if it can be paid annually as proposed it will be a great relief to the Maoris. I think if we could get this done we should withdraw our request for a reduction in the amount of the duty, for it would be a more difficult matter to get a reduction than to have it arranged that the amount should be paid yearly. Now, with regard to the proposal to make the Chairmen of the district Committees assist the Commissioner, I am not clear as to how that will be arranged. If the Chairman of a district Committee is appointed to assist the Commissioner to distribute the

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

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

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.

Hon. Mr. Ballance agreed with *Henare Matua* that two members and the Chairman would be sufficient to form a quorum; and he would give effect to that suggestion. He had received a number of printed amendments to the Committees Act, but had not yet been able to study them. He would, however, go carefully into the matter. His desire was to make the Committees more useful by giving them more power.

Hirini Taiwhanga said that he had a perfect right to speak about prospecting for gold and about surveys, as there was a bond of union between himself and the King Natives. If the whole of the Waikato Maoris had joined Wahanui in consenting to the survey of the land, then he (*Taiwhanga*) would have had nothing to say. He asked *Honana*, one of the King's advisers, whether such permission had been given, and the reply was that it was not the wish of all the Natives, but something which Wahanui had undertaken himself. Seeing that these people had not consented to the surveys, if those things were allowed to go on confusion would arise, such as took place with William King about Waitara. None of them were anxious for that state of things to occur again. Their great desire was that the Native Minister should assist them in getting some such law passed as he (*Taiwhanga*) had read. *Taiwhanga* denied the Minister's statement about Native schools, and said he placed no dependence on the promise of the Government that Native children would be educated. He would again ask the Minister to keep back the surveyors who were surveying the external boundary of the King country, and also to restrain Europeans from prospecting for gold.

Hon. Mr. Ballance: I have heard what *Taiwhanga* has said, and it appears to me that his ideas about promoting the welfare of the human race, and of the Native people in particular, are very crude. Let me refer to one or two things that he has said. He states that the Treaty of Waitangi guarantees to the Native people all the rights and privileges of British subjects. That is quite true; but how would he carry it out? He says, stop the prospecting in the King country. I hold in my hand a telegram from the Chairman of the Native Committee, which has unanimously agreed to send out prospectors. Now, whether are we, the Government, carrying out the Treaty of Waitangi by listening to the representations of the Native people, or by listening to *Hirini Taiwhanga*? I know that the Committee is elected by every Maori in that district, and I listened to its wishes, and gave effect to them. I do not know that *Taiwhanga* represents a single man in the Waikato. I have shown you clearly that the Government are carrying out the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi in carrying out the wishes of the Committee.—[*Hirini Taiwhanga*: Far from it.]—*Taiwhanga* says that my statement about the schools is not correct, and he says that he came down to Wellington and spoke about some system of schools that he had in his mind. What did he recommend? He recommended boarding-schools—taking away from the people their children when they were young; but we find that the people will not part with their children, and why should they? They love their children above everything in the world, and they like to have them with them. The Government establishes schools in all your settlements to enable the children attending school to live with their parents; and I ask you, which is the best system? Then, again, we have established schools to which children can be sent to receive a good education. Only lately I took into the Native Office a young man from Ngapuhi, who had been educated at Te Aute, and he is doing exceedingly well. Regarding the policy of *Tawhiao* and his followers, it seems they are trying to get the control of the land handed over to *Tawhiao*, and if this goes on it means that the land will be transferred from the rightful owners to others. My advice to you, and I think it is more in accordance with the Treaty of Waitangi, is this: let those who have land keep it, and not transfer it to some one else. *Hirini* says that if prospecting goes on there will be another Waitara. Well, the prospecting, as I have shown, is going on under the Committee. I ask this question, Who is going to fire the first shot? It must be *Hirini* and his associates, because the work is being done by the Committee; and I ask *Hirini* if he is prepared for the responsibility of firing the first shot. I only make these remarks in order to show you that what is going on at *Whatiwhati* is not a patriotic movement on behalf of the people, but very likely a selfish movement for the benefit of a few. I do not know whether you will expect me to address you again; but I will now conclude by just touching on one matter. I had a conversation to-day with *Harawira te Mahikai* in his tent, and he said a few words which touched me very closely and very deeply. He said first of all that the Treaty of Waitangi was very well, and that the *mana* was in the Queen; that it was the Queen and no one else who would preserve to you your lands. His other words were these: "Take care of my people, and do not be prevented by any faults of their own." I took these words down in my notebook, and shall never forget them, for so long as I have life I shall try to carry out the dying injunction of *Harawira*. And now let me thank you heartily for all the kindness you have shown to me since I first came amongst you. I bid you farewell on this occasion, but hope that we shall have the pleasure of meeting again.

Te Puke te Ao said that he would like to state that he was the proper representative of Waikato and the West Coast, and when the Land Disposition Bill was before the House he did his utmost to improve it. He endeavoured to prevent the provisions of the Bill affecting the land within *Tawhiao's* boundary; and it was through no fault of his that this was not done. Wahanui had supported him in this. *Taiwhanga* should not blame the Native Minister for the troubles in Waikato, but should consider how differently other Governments had treated the Natives—how *Te Whiti* and his people were treated by Mr. Bryce's Ministry. Mr. Bryce had not attempted to pacify *Te Whiti* in the first instance. But they could see that the present Native Minister had their interests at heart, as evidenced by his going about from place to place and meeting the Maoris. He fully appreciated the kindness of the Minister in attending the meeting and carefully explaining the provisions of the Bill. With regard to the prospecting in the King country the Native Minister had told them that the district Committee had consented to the prospectors being sent out; but he (*Te Puke*) thought that, in an important matter like this, the whole of the people should be consulted, and give their consent. It would not be sufficient for Wahanui alone to agree. Of course there are a

great many people who live under Wahanui's mana, and the same might be said of Tawhiao. He hoped that the Minister would be able to visit Waikato.

Hikawera Mahupuku, of Wairarapa, wished the law amended so that the franchise might be extended to all the Maoris, whether their land was subdivided or not—whether it was held in common or under Crown grant, or even if it had not passed the Court. He thought that it was the desire of all the Natives that there should be universal suffrage for the Maoris. Tawhiao had received a letter from Lord Derby, who, in reply to a despatch from the Governor of New Zealand, stated that he was very gratified to learn that it was the intention to increase the representation of the Maori people. He (*Hikawera*) would support that idea, and hoped that additional representation would be given to the Natives at the forthcoming session. He would not be satisfied with having European members in Parliament. He wished that there should continue to be Maori members in Parliament, but thought that, to be of any benefit to the Natives, there should be more.

Matenga Taiwhanga (Arawa and Ngapuhi) welcomed the Native Minister, and said that no Native Minister had displayed such consideration for the Natives as Mr. Ballance. Sir Donald McLean's intentions towards the Native people were very good, but, notwithstanding that, he used to pass laws in Parliament without ever consulting them.

Renata Kawepo: All the talk is ended. Reference has been made to what has been done in England. It may be that good will come from that, but I do not know. I say that the Queen is here present; her laws are over us. Why should we go to England to look for her? Perhaps her laws do not extend to Ngapuhi; as we find that Taiwhanga has been going elsewhere to look for her. I say that the Queen lives at Wellington, and that Tawhiao went to look for her in the wrong place. He went to England, and had to come back without seeing her. Deputations to England come here and ask us to pay their expenses; we give them money, and never know what becomes of it. Probably it is thrown into the sea. If we want to see the Queen, we should first go to her representative in New Zealand, and then it will be time enough to talk about going elsewhere. As our meeting is now at an end you will go away and leave us here. This is a greeting of mine to you; I thank you for having met us here and endeavoured to comply with our wishes. During the first days of the meeting, when this Bill was first submitted, I trembled within myself because I had my own misgivings. I say that we all had misgivings within our hearts. I was afraid that it would be quite useless for us to submit our suggestions to you, the Native Minister. I thought that perhaps you would cast them on one side, but I am delighted to find that every suggestion we made you have considered and endeavoured to give effect to. I now bid you farewell, and hope that you will be strong to carry out your good works. Go back to your place; we will stay here, waiting and watching. We will now part. I say, go back to your place and to your labours. I will remain here and count the few days that are left for me to live.

Aporo Wharetaniwha, of Tuhourangi, greeted the Minister, and expressed his pleasure at the result of the meeting, to which he only came to listen. He would go back with his heart full, and tell his tribe what had taken place. In his district the Minister was looked upon as a *kotuku rerenga tahi*. His tribe had been waiting patiently year after year, and Mr. Ballance had not yet come to see them. He (*Aporo*) was a representative of Tuhourangi, Ngatipikiao, and Ngatiwhakaue; but he only came to listen, and not to take an active part in the meeting. His last word of a farewell was a request that the Native Minister would visit the Tuhourangi Tribe in the month of March.

Maihi te Ngaru, of Ngatiwhakaue, said that he came to the meeting because it was called in the interest of the Native people, and would go back and fully inform his people of what had been done. He wished to request the Minister to empower their Committee of Ngatiwhakaue. The tribe elected a Committee, and now ask that it should be endowed with the proper legal authority.

Henare Tomoana: I wish you farewell; go back to labour for the colony. There will be no other thought in our minds after you go away. You have met us and agreed to what we have asked, and I am extremely gratified at the patient way you have waited and met us here day after day.

Henare Matua: I wish to speak about what you said with regard to the unity of the Natives. I accept your advice, and I shall act upon it. I say that this meeting will treasure up that advice. The meeting knows that you will go back to Parliament and do what you can for the benefit of the Maori people. I say, go back and work for the good of the land. May God preserve you and us also; and may we all be spared to meet again.

Rongowhitiari wished Mr. Ballance farewell, and thanked him for his visit; he would also like to thank the chiefs for their hospitality.

Wi Pere thanked the Minister for attending the meeting, and for the consideration he had shown to the Natives. He would like to mention to the Minister that there were lands in Gisborne which paid no less than three rates; he hoped that the law respecting that would be altered, and also that regarding the Native land duty.

Hikawera Mahupuku wished to thank the Native Minister for the work done at the meeting. He had been intimately acquainted with all previous Native Ministers, and none of them had treated the Natives so considerately as Mr. Ballance.

Matene Ruta, of Wairarapa, expressed his gratification at the result of the meeting. [Song.]

Hoani Meihana te Rangiotu: Salutations to you, Mr. Ballance, and to your friends, the Native chiefs. This meeting is now ended—all the work has been done. You have promised us that when you get back to Wellington you will embody the result of this meeting in a new Bill, and distribute it amongst the Natives. Let there be no delay. You are treating us like Sir Donald McLean used to treat us, only we did not know his thoughts as we know yours. I bid you farewell. Go back to the Waranga. [Song.]

Hon. Mr. Ballance : I have just one word to say in reply, if you will permit me. This meeting, from the beginning up to now, has been to me a very gratifying one. I have enlarged my circle of friends amongst the Native people, and I feel sure that it will be attended with great results. Much has been said about my kindness in coming amongst you. I think I have only done my duty. It appears to me that it is the duty of a Native Minister to go amongst the people to discuss their grievances and try to remedy them—to understand their wants and try to supply them. While that is my duty, I also, of course, have a feeling of love for the Native people. I never thought that they were so kind-hearted a people as I have found them, although I knew them to be a kind-hearted people before; it is to me, therefore, a solid pleasure to work for their welfare; and while I live, whether I am in office or not in office, I shall always try to remain the true friend of the Native people. Once again I thank you all for your many kind words, and now bid you farewell.

The meeting then terminated.

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