

hands of the Maoris themselves, just as they were before, and there is the putting of them out of their hands altogether. Now, between these two lies the safe road. Let the Maoris have their own people to manage, along with a man appointed by the Government; and let the Government be responsible for the proper distribution of the moneys through their man; and, if the Committee does not do its duty properly, let the people have the power of putting the Committee out and of putting a fresh Committee in. Then, let no land be sold; let all be leased only, so that even if for a little time things do not go on very well, still the land will be there, and we must learn step by step how to deal with it. Now we shall be glad to hear any of the others, for these are things that must be pulled about and examined.

*Aperahama Patene*: I belong to Waikato. I wish to explain to the Commissioners that all the lands of myself and tribe are within the confiscated boundary of the Government. I have heard what the Commissioners have said. Have the Commissioners come to establish some new system—to establish Native Committees and to abolish the Native Land Court?

*Mr. Rees*: Certainly not. The Commissioners have come to inquire into the complaints of the Maoris—to talk with the Maoris upon all necessary improvements.

*Aperahama Patene*: Then I am quite clear about that. I shall therefore express my views with regard to the first point spoken of by Pepene. We have all seen this burden that arises from the stamp duty on Native lands. We wish to get Crown grants for our lands. I agree with what Pepene said with regard to County Councils, and I think that Natives should be members of them if our lands are subject to taxation, and we do not know to what extent. If we were in these Councils we would know what rates were levied on our lands, and how the moneys arising therefrom were disbursed. There was a Committee appointed for the Waikato, but it did not have full power. When our Committees did anything it was referred to the Chief Judge to approve or otherwise. We have received notice to pay property-tax; we have received a demand from the Government to do so. We have not paid that money; we have merely acknowledged the receipt of the demand. We have no objection to pay taxes if we are allowed to take part in the County Council. That is one of the hardships we suffer from. Another thing that we object to is the Government taking the control over lands that are Crown-granted to the Natives in cases where we wish to lease or sell. We wish to have the same control over these lands that are Crown-granted to us as the Europeans have over their lands. I do not see anything wrong with the Native Land Court. Many of our troubles are settled in the Native Land Court.

*Te Rangikaripiripia*: Pepene has expressed our ideas on the matters before the Commission. I have nothing to say, but I wish to place a paper before the Commissioners. [Paper relating to a case before the Court produced and handed in.]

*Mr. Rees*: We cannot interfere with any Courts. We can only take the opinion of the Natives with respect to the law, with a view to its alteration if necessary. In the case of ten people in a certificate, and a number of the owners behind them, we can make the recommendation that the ten shall be compelled to account to the whole of the owners for their dealings with the land.

*Te Rangikaripiripia*: There is some trouble about that land. That is with regard to Tatua Rato. There are three subdivisions of that block. One subdivision was for sale. One portion of it was to be reserved. In subdivision No. 2 part was to be reserved and part to be sold, and the same with subdivision No. 3. Some of the Natives have leased and some have not, and those who have not leased do not understand the position, or how it is. Those who have not leased are in doubt whether they have a right to the portion that is leased. That is the perplexity we are in.

*Mr. Rees*: We are not a Commission to give advice upon that. We should be blamed if we did.

*Hokiri*: The reason why I wish to speak to the Commissioners is, that I have heard they will not go to Rotorua, Maketu, or Matata. That is why I wish to speak of some matters that affect the people there. I desire to speak more particularly with regard to the law relating to the confiscated land between Matata and Whakatane. That law does not allow successors to be appointed to deceased owners, as in the case of joint tenancy. The Natives there are suffering considerably through this. We felt greatly pleased when we heard that the Commissioners would inquire into these matters. That is why I ask that the law making all the people in the grants joint tenants may be amended. I ask that this land may be dealt with under the Native Equitable Owners Act, so that the people there may receive the proper benefit they are entitled to. There are about forty-six people in these grants, and there are over one thousand people who are entitled to the land. It was under the New Zealand Settlement Acts of 1863 that these lands were taken.

*Mr. Rees*: The people of Matata, Maketu, and Rotorua had better send a petition to Parliament detailing their grievances, and then most likely we shall be asked about it.

*Te Roera Herua*: Certain land at Whangamata went to a company, but we who own that land received no money for it.

*Mr. Mackay*.] Who handed it over to the company?—Six people.

Was it to the Patetere Company?—The Agricultural Company. Mr. Moon was connected with it.

*Mr. Rees*: We cannot enter into the dispute between you and the company. This is not a Court to decide disputes, but only to inquire into grievances. This Commission will advise that for cases like this a Court shall be constituted which shall come up and listen to all these matters. We can report that complaints were brought before us of this nature, and that therefore some Court should be constituted which should deal with these things. So also with regard to Tatua Rato, we can report that complaints were made and that some Court should be sent up to inquire into them.

*Arekatere Rongowhitiao*: There are a great many matters that I wish to speak about, but there is only one subject that I will touch upon now. We agree with what Pepene has said. The subject I desire to refer to is that of the rabbits in my part of the country. The Government are