

killing one another, and still the Government sits and looks on, saying, "Well, it is all right. Let them kill one another." There was a certain block of land called Pukeokuri, near Whangarei, and four people were killed there. The quarrel rose out of a survey. That was in the time of the Government of Atkinson and Mitchelson. I went personally to Mr. Mitchelson and requested that the surveyor should not be sent to survey that land. But that Minister would not listen to what I had to say. But when the four people had been killed he wrote to us and asked us to go into his presence. He addressed us, and asked that peace might be established. I said to him, "What is the use of your going to Whangarei when the people are killed? This is your evil work." That Minister replied, "No, it is not my fault." But his face became red when he heard those words of mine. Therefore it is that I wish to know from the Commissioners here whether they can ward off those evil things, or is the matter to be still left with the Government in Wellington. I wish the Commissioners to understand that I am speaking now upon what are regarded as most important matters by the whole of the people in this part of the country. You are aware that the Government is the cause of the evil that arises between the Maoris. I hope that this Government, of which my friend Mr. Rees is a supporter in the House, will be able to do some good in respect of Maori laws for the Natives who are themselves powerless; and if that be done then I may be able to look upon the work accomplished as being such as will benefit the Natives. I have nothing more to say. I cannot explain with regard to the laws. I leave that to Parliament. But I am one who is very bitterly opposed to the present Native-land laws.

Do you consider that if a system of dealing with the Native lands could be brought about by which Native Committees could choose the reservations required by the people in their own blocks, and the rest of the land could be leased by the Native Committees acting with Government Commissioners—the reserves to be taken out first of all, and then the portions of the blocks they did not want leased to Europeans, the deeds to be signed by some people chosen by themselves and the Government Commissioners—do you think that that system would answer, the Government Commissioners to be responsible for the proper distribution of the moneys among the whole of the people?—What you have said to me is clear. This is the desire of the Natives: that those people whom they may choose from among themselves should make the arrangements with regard to their lands. Do you mean that those people who would be chosen as the Committee should lease the land?

Along with the Government Commissioners?—I will speak about that presently. That land should not be given over to the Native Land Court to adjudicate upon. If the Native Land Court will have nothing to do with the land it will be an excellent thing for the Native Committee and the Government officer to see to the proper distribution of the money.

That would do away first of all with the expense of signing Maori deeds by all the people. Then it would prevent one man being got hold of by one European and another man being got hold of by another European. It would prevent all that kind of single dealing with the land?—Would the Native Land Court have anything to do with it?

Not necessarily. Some Court would have to decide, and give the certificate of title. But the Natives would decide their boundaries first of all, and take the matter into the Court?—The stumbling-block that we cannot get over is this Native Land Court.

We have got a very strong remonstrance about the Native Land Court, and that we shall pay attention to in our report. But we now want to go on to the method of dealing with the land?—Let me say again that I wish the whole of the Ngapuhi were here, so that there would be no difference of opinion regarding the Committees and the Commissioner having the power to lease the land for the people. Speaking as one man, I do not like to take upon myself to say Yes or No with regard to the leasing of the land.

There will be a meeting to-morrow and the next day at Waimate, for these matters to be spoken of?—Yes. A great meeting of the whole of the Ngapuhi will be held at Kaikohe on the 15th April, and that will be the time when these important questions you have mentioned will be laid before them. There may not be a very large assemblage of people at Waimate. At Kaikohe they will be most able to go fully into the work of the Native Land Court and its errors; but I cannot say what will be done with regard to the laws. There is another subject I wish to mention. It is with regard to the Government including portions of our land within its surveys. Some of my land has gone in that way. Haratu is the name of the first place; Ruapekapeka is another. The Government have taken that land and sold it to Europeans, and we are very dark about it. The Government surveyors have done that. Some four acres of my land have been taken in that way by the Government. I applied to the Government, and have received no word. I hope that the Commissioners will look into this matter.

*Mr. Rees:* We should like to have your individual opinion on the matters that have been submitted to you, even if it may not be the opinion of the whole tribe. We want the opinions of the leading men, because things cannot be allowed to stand as they are. Of course we do not wish to force individuals by bringing pressure to bear upon them. You will be able to have a talk among the people. Our opinion is that all dealings should be public dealings, and openly conducted, and not secret dealings with individuals. Should any other Maori like to say anything, of course we shall be glad to hear him.

*Hori Winiana:* I have something to say with regard to a block of land called Huiarau. That land will be dealt with by the Court at Waimate.

*Mr. Rees:* We have nothing to do with the Native Land Court. We can make recommendations as to what shall be done with the Court, but we cannot interfere with it otherwise.

*Hori Winiana:* There are about 100 acres in the Ruapekapeka Block, referred to by Pomare, that were wrongly included. There is the same complaint about Taumarere—7 acres have been wrongly included there. The railway-line goes along there. Subsequently the Government surveyor came and included this portion in the lands belonging to the Government.