

dealing with the schools. As Kawiti has said, it was because the Committees have no power of dealing with the schools, and because that power is entirely in the hands of the Government, that our school was broken up. That is what I object to. If the Commissioners will permit me, I should like now to speak about some land that was Crown-granted for the schools. This land has been surveyed by the Government and is occupied by a European. The person who is the owner of that land—the grantee—wishes the European to take away all his fences.

Mr. Rees.] It was granted, then, first of all to the Native?—Yes, and after it was Crown-granted to the Native a portion was surveyed off for the European, and the European occupies the land. The Native grantee wishes the European to remove his fences from the land. That is why I wish to point out the mistake the Government surveyor has made.

The Commissioners are especially stopped by the Governor from interfering at all with any agreements between individuals. But we can mention that complaints of such things have been made to us and should be inquired into, although we cannot ourselves inquire into them. We propose to ask the Government to make a Court which shall inquire into every one of these things, both where the Government itself has taken the land and where it has been granted to other Europeans. Then that Court should sit here in this district, so that both Maoris and Europeans may have the plans decided on the spot?—That is the reason why I have mentioned these matters to the Commissioners; that, although they may not themselves be able to settle them, they may point them out to the Government, with the ultimate object of having them all inquired into. I wish also to speak to the Commissioners with respect to Assessors of the Native Land Court. I object to them. My objection to them is that the Natives are not allowed to choose their Assessors—that is to say, that they are not elected in the same way as members are elected to the House. The Government chooses the Assessors, and selects men who are not well versed in Native customs. I shall instance the case of an Assessor who arrived along with Mr. Puckey. That Assessor belonged to the Ngati-whakaue Tribe. He was quite a young man. I saw him when he was sitting in the Court at Waimate, and he was very ignorant indeed. I said to the whole of the Ngapuhi that they should object to that Assessor sitting before the Court opened. They did not, however, object, as they were afraid of the Judge. And that person made mistakes in other parts of the Ngapuhi district, and the Ngapuhi were nearly treating him with violence. At last Mr. Puckey ordered the Assessor to go away. I hope therefore the Commissioners will represent this matter to the Government, so that the Natives may only have as Assessors men who are elected by the people themselves.

Hoterene Maiki Kawiti : In the printed circular that we received from the Commissioners it is said that we have to state what difficulties there are in relation to Maori matters, and I have stated these in pointing out the matter of lands taken from us by the Government. Having spoken of these lands of ours that have gone to the Government, I hope the Commissioners will be able to obtain them back for us.

Mr. Rees : We cannot go into that question. All we can do is to represent what has been said to us about it. It will be for the Committee of Parliament to look into the matter. We will pay attention to what has been said, and do the best we can in the interests of the Maoris.

OTOROHANGA, 15TH APRIL, 1891.

The Commission sat in the Native Land Courthouse at 10.30 a.m. Present: Messrs. W. L. Rees, M.H.R. (Chairman), J. Carroll, M.H.R., and Thomas Mackay. A number of chiefs and people of the Ngatimaniapoto Tribe were present.

Mr. Rees : The Parliament and the Government, finding that many complaints arise both from Natives and Europeans regarding the dealings with Native lands, and as to proceedings in the Native Land Court, have determined to inquire for themselves, by sending out Commissioners to meet the Natives face to face. The European members in the Parliament know very little about the Maoris, and those who are acquainted with Maori matters in many instances have themselves been engaged in the purchase of these Maori lands, and are therefore interested to some extent in the statements that they make to Parliament. The other members of Parliament, therefore, do not know, very often, whether things are not to some extent coloured and prejudiced by the Europeans who speak and have knowledge of these matters. The four Maori members in Parliament occupy a peculiar position. They of course know of the troubles under which the Maoris suffer, but the Maori members have in the past not been decided upon one political side or the other, fearing that if they joined any one side, and the other came into power, their action might be turned against the Maori people. The Parliament therefore determined to advise the Government to appoint as Commissioners the gentlemen now sitting here, two of them being members of Parliament (Mr. Carroll and myself), and the other Commissioner being a gentleman who has at the present time the charge of large Maori interests. And our instructions are to meet the Maori chiefs especially, and the people—the old and experienced people—in the different places, to have their words taken down, to allow them to ask us questions, and for us to ask them questions, so that we may go back to Parliament and tell the members how things really are, what wrongs the Maori people complain of, and what we think would do them good if brought into effect in the future. The Maoris will understand, therefore, that we are sent for the purpose of hearing whatever they complain of, and with the hope of so giving the light and truth to Parliament that good laws may be passed for them. Now, lately, you have had three sets of visitors at Otorohanga. The Governor came to show that not only he himself, but that the Queen and the Government, were animated by friendly feelings towards the people here. The Native Minister came because he was requested to come and hear the complaints which they had to make, and the requests they had to prefer to the Government. The Commissioners come from the Parliament, come from the Governor, and from the Ministers, to hear and to advise with the Natives, in the hope of getting laws passed for their benefit which will be binding in effect.