

that was put to Whitinui, our minds are not quite made up upon that point. If we were a people well versed in these matters and in Court matters we would be clear as to the questions put to Whitinui. We considered this question of appointing Committees to manage the lands when we went outside to-day. We did not think that any good would come from it, but perhaps evil would. That is the reason why we said we did not like it; and it was owing to questions put to us on other matters by the Commissioners that Whitinui and myself have given the replies we have. But we have not actually come to definite conclusions. And in the same way with regard to what we are saying now, it should not be accepted as final. So in that way we do not know whether this would be a good road or whether that would be a good road to take. We would like the Government, however, to remove the restriction from our lands, and we can consider these other matters afterwards. Do not be angry with us over this. Do not say this: that, if we have nothing to adopt in substitution for the removal of the restriction, that the restriction will not be removed. We say that there is no reason for having the restriction on our lands. I am saying this to make the matter clear. There is one small matter arising out of a question put to Whitinui I wish to speak about. We have resolved among ourselves not to have Committees to control matters. That was the conclusion we came to to-day when we were considering these matters, and that if the Government persist in making a law constituting Committees there should be some clause inserted permitting persons to remain outside—not to be included—in fact, to make the thing optional. I have already mentioned this matter to the Native Minister, Mr. Cadman. What I have said is the result of the deliberations of the people.

*Mr. Rees*: Parliament has to look out for the interests of a great country, involving the interests of both Maoris and Europeans—not merely the interests of one particular race, but the interests of all the people. It must make a law for the whole of the country. Now, it is most anxious to make a fair and just law. It does not want to take by force a foot of any man's land, or to compel him to sell or lease it, but it wants to avoid the rocks on which the canoe has been going for years. It wants to avoid for the future the wrecks that have happened in times gone by, and therefore it will not reproduce in this district the same conditions that now exist, and are ruining the people, both Maoris and Europeans, on the East Coast and about Napier. Now, the questions which were put by Mr. Carroll to Whitinui were sensible, pertinent questions—proper questions to be put. The answers made by Whitinui were such answers as a man ought to make, because they were sensible. There is a reason for every one of them. And, even whether they were right or wrong, they were answers to the questions put. How can we go back to the Parliament and say the Ngatimaniapoto want the restriction taken off, and that afterwards they will say what they will do with their land? What is the good of saying that? The Parliament will say at once, "Very well, then, if the restriction is removed, what are they going to do with the land?" Now, if we take Whitinui's answers, Parliament will understand the position at once, and may say, "Very well, we will modify our plans, and carry out a system of that nature;" but if, as Edwards suggests, only the restriction is to be removed, Parliament will not remove it. And the reason is this: The Parliament is already covered with confusion and trouble on account of having removed such restrictions in other districts. Half of the time of the Parliament is being taken up with these disputes in other districts, and it is not likely Parliament will commence it again in this immense district. Most likely Parliament would make it a condition that if the restriction were removed some such method of dealing should be set up as that which Whitinui referred to in answer to Mr. Carroll's question. The Parliament is not averse at all to giving back to the Natives the control of these lands, but it will say that the Natives must work sensibly—that is all. Now, here Edwards may well say the Natives have not had much time to consider; but the Parliament has had twenty-five years of trouble to consider. Therefore the Parliament knows all about it. And the Parliament knows that to take off the restriction and leave everything open, so that a hundred Europeans may come in and purchase and lease, might plunge the country into another twenty years of trouble; but if the whole of the people in a block—the hundred or the hundred and fifty owners—be gathered together, and then a contract is made by general consent, and a few are chosen to carry it into effect, there would be no trouble after that. Parliament will be anxious to give much of the power to the natural leaders of the people—the heads of the families; but if Parliament finds that they will not take it then the Parliament will have to make such a law as it considers wise. That is all. We are very glad to have met you, although some of you have not made up your minds upon certain points; and the Commissioners do not feel at all offended or hurt, because their object was to get a real expression of opinion from the Natives. They may depend upon this: that before any law is passed it will be printed in Maori and circulated amongst the Natives, so that they will see what it is proposed to do.

*Whitinui*: With regard to the desire of Parliament that there should be one law, that is right. I do not know whether that is what the Parliament does. The Commissioner said that for twenty-five years Parliament has been sitting, and the troubles are increasing. For that time, too, Parliament has been oppressing the Native people. How can the four Native members compete against the eighty-odd European members? And how can Parliament say it is working for the benefit of both races? Then, we ask, how is it that the lands belonging to the Natives are subject to restriction, while the lands of the Europeans are let go free? The Natives at the present time are like horses in blinkers—they cannot see either on one side or the other. This injustice of having restrictions imposed on our lands surpasses all the others. I make this statement on account of what was said of the Parliament making laws for one people. That is all I have to say. Convey to Parliament that our desire is that the restriction should be removed.

*Te Kooti*: Welcome the Commissioners. I have responded to the invitation to be present. I have listened to what the Commissioners have stated, and I have heard what has been said in reply. For myself I have nothing to say. My word simply is: Save the land and the people.

*Mr. Carroll*: If the Natives should decide upon anything hereafter, they can send it in writing to the Commissioners.

*Taonui*: The number of Native members for Parliament should be increased.