

Now, does that provoke any active opposition on the part of these people, or is it merely a negative or passive opposition?—It is a negative opposition. The Europeans say that they are improving the land, but that what is the use of doing that unless the land is to be settled on!

*Mr. Mackay*: In order to bear its share of taxation, of course?

*Mr. Carroll*.] Of course they take, without compensation, the land required for those roads?—I am not sure of that. In some cases there is a surplus in the Crown grant, specially made for roads, but I do not think, if the matter were taken to law, they would be entitled to compensation.

That is the difference between Native land and European land so far as roads are concerned. The European from whose private property a portion is taken for the purposes of a road is entitled to compensation, whereas if you take the road through a Native's land the Native is not entitled to compensation?—It is not so in all cases. I may instance the case of the railway taking part of the Taumaha Native Reserve. There compensation was paid.

The difficulty I can see, in regard to the Natives here, is that there is a strong section of them under the influence of Te Whiti, who are against dealing with the land in any shape or form. They do not study the advantage of it at all. There are others who wish to break out from that thralldom—men of more intelligence than the rest, who are less subject to Te Whiti's influence. They are quite willing, as far as I can learn, to act rationally, and have their lands thrown open for selection. In now making a law to deal with the case, you would have an arbitrary law for those who are under Te Whiti's influence, and a mild and reasonable one for those who are outside of that influence. Is not that the case?—You have hit it exactly. It is not for me to say that the Government ought to do this thing or the other, but, at any rate, I think Mr. Carroll has hit the right nail on the head. It seems harsh; but look at the necessity for some action of the kind. As an instance, take the land Mr. Smith mentioned on the other side of Waitara. If the land is taken by me the Natives will not oppose my doing so, but they will send a petition to Parliament. I am sure of that; therefore, of course, I do not think it worth while to take the liberty. But I do not think the Natives would have made any active opposition had I done so.

*Mr. Rees*.] Then, speaking as a public official having intercourse with the Natives, you do not think, if a reasonable law were made for these matters—fencing, road-making, and leases—they would offer any active opposition?—I do not; I certainly do not. Possibly Mr. Carroll was thinking of those who did not choose to elect a Committee when he spoke of an arbitrary law, and I quite agree with him.

No doubt, and so am I speaking of them?—Then, they would simply throw the onus on the officer.

But, on the other hand, some are prepared to go slightly in advance in that particular?—No doubt. I must say, however, that, in my opinion, the Committee, if elected, would be probably conservative and rather obstructive.

Very possibly. Still, you would have some material to do with. Passing from the position of the Natives in these matters to the position of the European public of this place, do you consider that it would be in their interest that such a reasonable law should be passed?—Undoubtedly, sir.

*Mr. Smith*: Here is a paper containing some information which will throw a little light on the views of the County Councils.

[*Mr. Rees* then read out from the *Taranaki Weekly News* of the 11th April, 1891, the following extract from the report of a meeting of the Clifton County Council: "Native Lands.—Proposed by Councillor Halcombe, and seconded by Councillor Old, 'That the Government be requested to appoint Mr. John Elliot to negotiate the purchase of the Native lands contained in Blocks X. and XI., Waitara Survey District (containing about 6,140 acres), but especially of that portion called the Otaraoa Block (containing 2,624 acres), the acquisition by the Government of such block being essential to the progress and successful settlement of a large portion of the Clifton County, and the Council having every confidence that Mr. John Elliot can effect the purchase at a reasonable rate.' Carried."]

*Mr. Rees*: That is the land that you have been alluding to?

*Mr. Smith*: Yes.

*Mr. Rees*: Would it not be sufficient if the Government were to pass such an Act as we have been just now discussing, by which land would be thrown open for selection?—That would meet the case.

If it were thrown open for settlement it would be subject to rating?—Yes.

Can you state whether the difficulties which we have been discussing with yourself and Mr. Rennell in connection with fencing, leasing, road-making, and rating affect merely one portion of the district or the whole of it?—The whole district from one end to the other. I can get you the members of the different County Councils and the prominent men of the various Road Boards to confirm what I say.

Would it not be wise for them, if there be this general anxiety for action in the direction you have indicated, to pass special resolutions for presentation by you to the Assembly, asking that such amendments in the law should be made?—Yes, if you think it would strengthen your hands.

I think it would strengthen our hands very much if you, the people who are directly interested, should say it would be in the best interests of the Natives that this should be done?—At present the Natives are drawing no benefit from the land, and if this thing were done they would be drawing some benefit in the shape of rent, the land would be improved, and roads would be made to the different parts.

I would suggest, therefore, and I am sure Mr. Carroll will join with me in saying that it would strengthen the report of the Commission if any representations they had to make on these matters were seconded by a direct communication from the local bodies. Speaking entirely for myself, I may say that what is asked seems to me reasonable. At any rate, in respect of anything fair and reasonable, such a representation from the European inhabitants of the district would have considerable force and weight.