

points to the Commission. I thought, however, that on some subsequent occasion, when there would be a large assembly of the Natives, I would be able then to select the particular portions of the existing law that we approved of, and make them known to the Commission. I now stand up to explain the position, and to let the Commissioners know what I have since done. The Native assemblage that I had in my mind when I last addressed you was the meeting that subsequently took place at the Wairoa. The object of that meeting was to consider and lay down plans for what should be done by Parliament with respect to the grievances under which the Natives labour; and on my arrival here I was not made acquainted with what that meeting did. And on account of the scattered position of the Natives I was unable to make known to them what had transpired in Auckland when I appeared before the Commissioners. Now, for the first time since my return, do I see the people assembled together, and in the brief period at my disposal now I shall not be able to state what took place up in Auckland. Nor can I go into the question relating to all these Acts, beginning with that of 1865, and coming down to the present matters that were referred to by me when I was in Auckland. There is no opportunity at present, therefore, for the Natives to single out the particular objectionable features that are in those Acts that have been passed. It is a new matter to the Natives here with the exception of myself, and I am appearing for the second time before the Commissioners. I wish to speak with regard to what Mr. Carroll said this morning when he mentioned the particular scope of the duties for the performance of which the Commission was constituted—that is to say, the several orders of reference in their commission. I am going through the different points under their respective headings, and I would like to know in this connection, are they the particular heads on which it is desired that the present assembly of Natives should express their opinions to the Commissioners?

*Mr. Rees*: Yes.

*Hamiora Mangakahia*: Now, this is what I have heard from the Commissioners this morning: that with regard to the old laws that have been passed the Natives are loud indeed in their lamentations, as they operate very oppressively towards the Natives. Hence it was that the Government now in power considered it advisable to appoint a Commission like this to ascertain from the Natives of this Island their opinions as to what they would think advisable to have done in regard to making laws for the Natives and their lands, and then to state if the laws previously passed were bad or not, or whether some of those laws were bad, or whether all of those laws were bad. It would be simply a matter for the Natives themselves to express their opinions, and state what they desired should be done. That is the note that I made of what the Commissioners said this morning. That is what I glean from their remarks. Now, I wish to make clear my meaning with respect to those reasons that have been stated—that we are not in a position to-day to place lucidly and distinctly before the Commissioners our views on all these matters, because we have not the means of presenting the Commissioners with absolute proof in support of any contention we may make in condemnation of the existing laws passed by Parliament in former times. In the first place we are not in possession of a copy of the laws that have been passed in former times by Parliament, and, not having access to them, of course we are not able to state distinctly what our views are concerning them. But what we are very pleased and gratified at is that the Commissioners have come amongst us and are taking steps to ascertain what our views are. The Commissioners on their part will recognise by the great number present here to-day that the Natives have been eager to meet them, and to make known their opinions on such subjects as they have been considering. All the chiefs of Heretaunga have come here to lay their views before the Commissioners. But we are unable at the present time to state distinctly and definitely what our views are with regard to the laws. We cannot point out the particular operation of the laws that is to our detriment. It must not be imagined that we do not approve of the investigation that the Commission is making. That is not the reason. But we have not the laws before us to refer to. Salutations to you!

*Mr. Carroll*: Then, those who have not access to the laws should not have any objection to replying to any question, that may be put to them?—Certainly not.

In your opinion, is there a strong feeling of objection amongst the Natives to the old laws?—Yes.

And your meaning is that, although there are presumably defects, you cannot point out the precise defective operations in the laws?—Yes.

What is your opinion in regard to this idea: That all the Native-land laws from the beginning should be repealed?—I would be in favour of repealing all of them.

And that a new law should be commenced from the present time?—Yes; there should be a new law made. The reason why I agree to the repeal of the past laws is that under the old laws we have Crown grants, certificates of title, and memorials of ownership—different classes of title—and each class is different in its effect. Some of these are not equal in power and effect to the Crown grants. There are so many provisions and alterations on the subject that the Natives are unable to grasp their meaning. As time goes on provisions relative to the Crown grants become attached to other titles than the certificate of title, and the transition from the memorial-of-ownership title to the Crown grant is surrounded with so many provisions that the Natives cannot follow it. That is the reason why I think all the other laws should be wiped out.

Now, supposing a new law were to be made, what would be your own opinion with regard to it—that there should be only one law to deal with disputes arising out of transactions in the past?—I am not able to give a reply to that question. It is not that there is any desire on my part to shirk the question.

We are seeking out a way of dealing in a comprehensive and satisfactory manner with past transactions that are in dispute, and we wish also to have a separate law for dealing with all future transactions?—This is a very important matter, requiring grave consideration, and I have not been able to give it the attention it deserves; consequently I am unable to state definitely what should be done.