

the Natives of this district have got to say. The subjects mentioned by the Commissioners, and referred to by Henare Matua, will have to be considered by the Natives. That is what I have to say in support of that. Another reason that has influenced me to stand up and speak is that, although the Commissioners have stated that another Commission will be set up to inquire into matters of complaint on the part of the Natives, I should like, notwithstanding this, to refer now to a special matter. I support what has been said about the people having their shares in the land cut out before leasing or selling, for my opinion is that there should be no individual dealing until subdivision has taken place. I wish now to explain to the Commissioners about a certain block of land in connection with which there is a great deal of difficulty. It is named Waimarama. There are three blocks—Waimarama, Okaihau, and Waipuka—blocks under lease to Mr. Moore. A new lease was negotiated before the old one expired. Donnelly was the man who instigated the new lease. Before the original term had expired he tried to get a new lease for himself; and then dissension and confusion took place among the owners. Minets Hagon, and the others went away on Donnelly's suit. In consequence of this confusion, the lease was not concluded. Then, afterwards Donnelly applied to the Native Land Court for a subdivision, the total area of the land being 35,000 acres. Donnelly got 30,000 acres, and 3,000 acres were given to the people. After a good deal of fighting in the Court, Donnelly's lot got 25,000 acres, and my people, who were the majority, got 10,000 acres. I did not agree to that subdivision of the Court, and I applied, therefore, to have the case reheard. I represented the majority of the owners. My application for a rehearing was not agreed to by the Chief Judge, and I then carried on my application to the Supreme Court. An arrangement, however, was come to between the parties, the result of which was that, with the consent of the Chief Judge, a subdivision order was made by the Native Land Court, and the land went back to its original state, in which it is now. When it reverted to its original state, Donnelly wanted a renewal of the lease. After this, a new lease was granted to Thomas Moore by me. There were three years of the term of the old lease remaining unexpired when we got the new lease prepared. Assuming friendship, the Donnelly party joined in this lease, but after it was executed they started an action which had the effect of preventing the rents from being paid, and this, too, after they had signed. We have not received any rents, in consequence, since the time of signing the new lease. There is £8,100 of rent now due to us, and we cannot get sixpence of it. Donnelly and his lawyers have taken such steps as have had the effect of preventing that money being paid, and during the interim he is seeking to purchase the shares of the Natives who are interested.

*Mr. Rees.*] Has there been a petition before the House of Representatives about this matter?—Yes.

The best thing for you to do will be to have another petition sent down before Parliament meets next month, asking Parliament to look into the former petition as well. Then we can report that the matter has been brought before us, and we can say that, although it is impossible for us to deal with it, yet we recommend Parliament to at once take it in hand, and have the matter settled properly. That will strengthen your petition?—That is why I mention the matter before this Commission, so as to strengthen my hands.

We will report the matter to Parliament, and ask to have it finally settled. I understand that Mr. Carroll, your member, has brought this case twice before Parliament already—that is to say, in two separate sessions. He was enabled to get a clause passed in one of the Acts, which prevented injustice being done; but then the other side got another clause in which neutralised part of that which Mr. Carroll was doing. But we shall recommend to the Government and to the Parliament that they shall not be humbugged by false dealing in the matter, but that light shall be let into it, and that what is right and proper shall be done. And we shall recommend the Parliament also that, wherever the Commission finds persons are interesting themselves to sow dissension for their own purposes, the Commission shall have power to punish them right away?—That is the reason why I have mentioned this matter to the Commissioners.

Perhaps it would be better not to say any more about it, lest it be said we are taking a side?—We have been praying for a subdivision time after time, and we cannot get it.

*Arapeta Meha:* I wish to say something to the Commissioners. I support what Pene te Ua said—that the Natives should have time to lay their views before the Commissioners with regard to the laws affecting them. We do not want the half-castes or agents to lay down laws for us.

*Captain Blake:* Half-castes are as much Maoris in the eyes of the law as the Maoris themselves.

*Mr. Rees:* That is so.

*Arapeta Meha:* My remarks apply to agents in conducting cases. Of course, Captain Blake is an agent conducting cases in the Native Land Courts that sit in Heretaunga. What our earnest conviction is, is that the agents should be dispensed with, and that the owners of the land should conduct their own cases. As it is, we are suffering a good deal from the action of the agents. There is more money paid away for the services of these agents than is absorbed in the payment of the Court fees. Should a lawyer be engaged in one of these cases it would cost about £5 a day for his services. It is not as if it were through the agents that the claims were established.

*Mr. Carroll.*] What you mean, then, is that you object to agents?—Yes; that is what I mean. There is one part of what Captain Blake has said that the Natives here are sore about, and that is his recommendation that the Native Land Court should be empowered to cut land off in order to pay the agents' charges. The Native agents should only have the ordinary remedy at law for their claims. Let them sue in Court in the ordinary way any person who has engaged them, and to whom they have rendered a service. That is what I think: the agents should be paid in money, not in land. Another matter upon which I wish to make complaint is as to the removal of the Tapaeru Flag-station on the railway-line here. I hope it will be re-established. Its removal is a