

the surplus Native lands are leased, that I hold the view I have expressed in relation to the subject of Native Committees. There is really nothing here for a Committee to do. It is only right and proper that I should lay this matter before the Commissioners, because I myself am a land-owner. My individual interests in the land are ascertained, and if I wish to lease to a European I am in a position to do so, for I am a person of experience and knowledge, and I know, therefore, how to regulate terms and conditions with the European. The members of the Committee could act for that class of people who are incapable of managing their own affairs. Now, with regard to leases being for terms of thirty years: It is said in reference to this that, if the lands are within the town, the lease should be for a term of seven years; if the land is situated two miles away from the town, the terms of the leases should be fourteen years, and up to a limit of thirty years. What I wish to say upon that point with regard to my own land is, that I do not propose to lease my land to Europeans for thirty years, but merely for twenty-one years, or for fourteen years, or seven years, or three years. There may be some good work for the Committees to carry out in those parts of the country where there are great numbers of owners in the land, and where these lands are not individualised among the Native owners. Now, in regard to the work of the Committees in investigating the title to Native land, it is said that the Committees to investigate these titles should be selected from the Natives in the district in which such land is situated. Well, I am not clear with reference to that. I am rather inclined to think that the services of outside Committees should be obtained for such work; and my reason is this: that the whole of the Natives in a particular district would be connected by ties of relationship, even if there were five generations removed. Consequently I do not think the Natives of the district should investigate the claims to land in that district in which they are residing. As an illustration of the force of this contention, I would point out that the Native Land Court does not avail itself of the services of an Assessor residing in any district in which land is to be dealt with, but obtains the services of Assessors residing in other parts of the country. The reason why it pursues that practice is this: that, if an Assessor was obtained to assist the Court in dealing with lands situated in his own district, it would at once be concluded by the Natives who were interested that he would be influenced by feelings of partisanship, and that consequently he would not act impartially. I think, therefore, that the Committee which should deal with any Native land in this district should come from Wanganui, Taranaki, or some remote place. That is all I wish to say to the Commissioners. I did not attend the meeting at the Wairoa, because I did not receive notice; but others of us who did receive notice went there.

*Te Whatahoro:* I stand up for the purpose of laying before the Commissioners what took place at the meeting at the Wairoa. Before I enter upon my explanation of the subjects dealt with there I should like to make a few remarks. Notice was received from the people in the Wairoa that their meeting would be held on the 26th February last. All the Natives of the Wairarapa thereupon assembled in the Fire Brigade building at Greytown, to consider whom we should send to that meeting. The notification of the meeting came to us at the time that we were engaged in the Native Land Court that was sitting here. Ngawakaakupe was the name of the block that was being investigated at the time. We therefore decided that the people of the Wairarapa could not attend that Wairoa meeting, owing to their being so busily engaged in the Native Land Court. But it was suggested to the chiefs of the Wairoa that it might be possible to have their meeting adjourned. Subsequently some of us went to Wellington, and we there heard that Wi Pere would agree to the Wairoa meeting being adjourned as we had suggested. Then we received a second notice, informing us of the adjournment of that meeting to the 9th April. The Committees of the whole of the Wairarapa district accordingly held another meeting, to ascertain who should be the persons who should attend that meeting at the Wairoa, and what were the subjects that should be brought before it. All the matters to be brought before the Wairoa meeting were fully discussed, and were written down, and finally it was decided that Piripi and myself should go as representatives to the Wairoa. It was also arranged that if the Ngatiraukawa or Wanganui should likewise hold a large meeting these same subjects should be submitted to them, and that Tunuiarangi and others should attend at such meeting as our representatives. That was the clear arrangement arrived at by the Wairarapa Natives. I have also an observation to make with regard to what Hamiora has said. It is quite correct that he did not join in that meeting. He was unavoidably absent. I shall now proceed to read out the resolutions that were passed at the Wairoa meeting.

*Mr. Rees.*] How many people do you think there were at the Wairoa?—According to the calculation of the newspaper writer who was there, there were about four thousand men, women, and children. In my own opinion, the number of men there was over a thousand. Included in that number there were fifty of the Urewera, who took part in that meeting. Then, from the Ngatiporou country, extending southwards to Mohaka, there were a hundred and fifty. Of the Ngatiporou at Mohaka the greater number of the men attended the meeting; the women and children returned to their homes. The tribe that was unrepresented there was the Ngatikahungunu, from the Heretaunga district.

*Mr. Rees.*] We met them at Waipawa, and, although they were willing to act, they were all in confusion as to what to do, because they had not attended the meeting at the Wairoa. They are going to send us the result of their deliberations?—On the 9th day of April the business of the Wairoa meeting commenced, and at the outset the course pursued was to select two or three persons from the different tribes to sit as a Committee. The number of persons so chosen amounted to forty. The subjects that I am about to refer to were those that were considered by this Committee of forty. The proceedings were opened by the reading of the notice that appeared in the newspaper with reference to the Commissioners who were then travelling throughout this Island.

These, then, were the resolutions that the meeting finally arrived at and passed:—

“1. That the name of the Court shall be the District Native Land Court.—Passed.

“2. That the Chief Judge of the District Native Land Court shall preside in virtue of the powers he now holds as Chief Judge, and in like manner as he has hitherto done prior to this law, having the same full powers, notwithstanding alterations in the law hereunder made.—Passed.