

proceedings of the Commission. We shall see also that our report, so soon as it has been printed in Maori, is circulated far and wide among the whole of the Native tribes in both the North and South Islands of the colony. We are very glad to have met the Natives here, and, as Mr. Carroll has already said, we are especially glad to find that they are prepared to give proper and reasonable attention, to the best of their ability, to finding a way out of the difficulties that hitherto have interposed themselves between Natives and Europeans in dealing with the Native lands. It shall not be our fault if anything be left undone to fulfil the best wishes they have for their own prosperity and happiness.

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OTAKI, 11TH MAY, 1891.

The Commission sat in the Maori runanga-house at 2 p.m., and was met by a large assemblage of the Ngatiraukawa Tribe, who extended a very cordial welcome. Present: Messrs. W. L. Rees, M.H.R., J. Carroll, M.H.R., and Thomas Mackay.

*Mr. Rees:* The Commissioners have come here, having been authorised by the Governor to meet the Maoris in their own homes. We commenced our labours at Gisborne, and since then we have worked all round the Island, and now are bringing our duties to an end at Otaki. Year after year for a long time past Parliament has had petitions sent to it from all the Maori tribes, complaining of very many injuries which the Natives have suffered by reason of the dealings with their lands, and by reason of the operation of the Native Land Courts. The Parliament itself was unable to find out the truth of these statements, because some of the people cry out for one thing, and others of them cry out for some other thing, and it was therefore difficult for the Parliament, not knowing the facts, to decide which was right and which was wrong. At last it was determined that Commissioners should be chosen; some of them being members of the Parliament, and that they should go round and meet the Native people face to face, writing down everything that was said to them, hearing the statements that the different tribes had to make, and then that they should return to Wellington and report to the Parliament itself. We are those Commissioners, and our duty therefore is to meet the Maoris as we are meeting them here to-day, elicit their views and their grievances, and then make a full report on everything we have seen and heard; and send it to the Governor, who will cause it to be laid before the Parliament for the Parliament to determine what action is called for. Now, the subjects we have to bring before the Natives I shall proceed to state to them. First of all, the Native Land Courts: whether the operation of these Courts—their method of conducting the business that comes before them—is satisfactory to the Maoris, and whether the Maoris themselves can suggest any alterations that might be made for the greater benefit of the people. The second point is, as to disputes between Natives and Europeans regarding the Native lands. The third is, as to what would be a better means of dealing with Maori lands in the future than has obtained in the past. The fourth is, as to a satisfactory method of ascertaining the Maori title to lands—that is to say, finding out what tribes and hapus, and what individuals, own the various lands of the Maoris. And then we are commanded, in addition to all these special heads or classes of cases, to inquire into any other things, and get the opinions of the Maoris about any other things, which are not included in those I have mentioned, but which have also to do with the Maoris and their lands, and their general prosperity. I shall just illustrate this last subject by saying that I went up into the village this morning and I saw there a school-house, and I heard from the Maoris that they had given land for the purposes of a school, but that, although the schoolhouse is there, no school is conducted in it. The Natives also say that the revenues arising from this endowment are not being spent for the benefit of the Maoris. That, then, would be one of the additional subjects to which I have generally referred. Any grievances, therefore, which the Maoris complain of—any sort of injury which they believe themselves to labour under—they are at liberty to bring before the Commission. Their evidence will be taken down, and will be laid by the Governor before the Parliament, and we shall state in our report what we think of the justice of any complaints which the Natives think fit to bring before us. Now, we are aware that a great part of the Native lands here are subdivided and in the possession of the different individual owners. That is not the case, as the Natives here very well know, with many other tribes in other districts. And, although the dealing with the Native lands by Native Committees and runangas of the people may not affect the Natives of the Otaki district so much as it would affect others, yet we shall be anxious to get their opinions for the benefit of the other Maoris, as well as for their own benefit in the management of their lands. They must remember that they also are Maoris, and that therefore anything which conduces to the welfare of the whole Maori people they should be ready to speak upon and to act upon.

*Mr. Carroll:* The business of this Commission has now been made clear to you. Its presence here and its visits to other parts of the Island arise, as Mr. Rees has stated, from an anxiety on the part of Parliament to ascertain the truth in relation to the statements which have been made to it from time to time for a long period in relation to the Natives and their lands. That anxiety led to the appointment of the Commissioners who are now before you, so that they might ascertain the truth or otherwise of the lamentations that were sent up on account of the variety of complaints that are made, and the facts concerning which the existing Parliament found itself unable to decide. With the object, therefore, of ascertaining what remedial action was called for, the Parliament resolved to appoint this Commission to elicit the opinions of the Natives themselves. It is in the performance of this duty that we have travelled through the various parts of this Island. The various expressions of opinion that have been made to us by the Natives in the different districts that we have visited have been carefully recorded, and will be duly considered by the Commissioners, who will submit the result of their labours to the Parliament, and thereby shall the Parliament be enabled to arrive at a correct solution of the question that now agitates the minds of both races. In the past the general statement was that Parliament, in passing its laws, did not consult the Natives with respect to them; and to prevent any such allegations in the future it was decided that