

this Commission should ascertain what laws were desired, so that the Natives may have no reason to say for the future that they were not consulted as to the legislation that was to be passed. We are aware that dissatisfaction has always existed from the very commencement of the passing of laws affecting the Natives in this colony. In some respects the object sought to be attained by these laws was good, but the hands to which the carrying-out of those laws was committed were bad; while in other cases the performing hands were good and effective, but the laws themselves were bad—that is to say, in some of the cases the laws were good but the administration of them was bad, while in other cases the administration was good but the laws themselves were inherently bad. The main thing upon which legislation has to take place now is with regard to the land. The question to be determined is, by what means can the best legislation be decided upon in order that the greatest amount of benefit may accrue, and in what respect can such alterations be made that pace can be kept with the progress of the time? Shall we revert to the ways of our ancestors in dealing with our lands; shall we let things proceed as they are now; or shall we advance and build up a system of dealing more in accordance with European ways? Now, in the pursuance of our investigations into all these matters we have travelled round the Island; we have heard the expression of the opinions entertained by the various tribes settled in the different parts of the country, and I shall be very glad to make known to you what is the general opinion of the Natives of this Island. Now, my opinion is that the Natives are united in regard to the main principles, but as to how these principles are to be administered there is a variance between different parties. That, perhaps, is sufficient for me to say upon that particular head. We have arrived now at a time when matters cannot be allowed to remain at a standstill. Powerful influences are at work at the present time, and the object should be to give tangible shape to our ideas with regard to the future. The main subjects have been mentioned to you. The first of these is in relation to the Native Land Court. That subject embraces a very wide field. Shall things remain in the condition that they are in now, or shall they be altered, or shall a system of Native Courts be amalgamated with the present system, or shall we constitute a system which will give the whole power of the Native Land Courts into the hands of the Natives? Another subject is as to the best means to be adopted for enabling persons to deal with their lands in the future. Well, that will be a matter for yourselves to look into. Another question is as to the various subjects of grievance that the Natives have been petitioning about year after year for a very long time past. What course shall be adopted with regard to this matter? Shall these things be left to be still petitioned about, or shall some tribunal be appointed to deal with them? However, this is a matter for yourselves to express an opinion upon. These are all the subjects that my friend Mr. Rees has explained to you, and I have merely mentioned some of the minor points connected with these subjects.

*Hoani Taipua, M.H.R.*: I am very much pleased at your visit here. I am, however, sorry that you did not let us know that you were coming. Had you let me know of your intention to visit this place and meet the Natives here, the whole of the tribes of this district would have been present to-day. But, coming upon us so suddenly as you have done, we are naturally somewhat taken by surprise. If I had received timely notice from you the whole of the people would have assembled here. Perhaps you were putting so much "side" on that you did not care to give us notice. At any rate I say to the people who are assembled here this afternoon, Now is the time for you to give utterance to your views on the subjects that have been referred to by the Commissioners. This is the proper course to adopt in proposing to legislate with reference to our affairs. Now is the time, therefore, to make known what should be done with regard to what concerns ourselves. It is not for me to reply at once, or be the first to express my opinions. I throw upon the people who are here, the onus of stating their own opinions. That is the reason why I ask you to say at once what you have to say; and I shall then support it as your member. Whether the things which the Commissioners have spoken to you about should be done away with or altered is a fair subject for discussion and investigation. This is an opportunity of which you may avail yourselves—you, the last but not the least section of the Natives whom the Commissioners have visited in the course of their travels over the Island. Speak, therefore, now what you have to say, dealing in the first instance with the most important subjects.

*Ropata Ranapiri* (Robert Ransfield): Let me speak in accordance with the manner the Natives would observe on an occasion of this sort. The meaning of this travelling party, in our acceptance of the term, is its special meaning: first, with regard to its actual travelling, and then as to those travelling being received by us as visitors. A person who remains in one place is called a resident. I thought that, in accordance with Maori custom, the guests should be welcomed in the Maori fashion by the residents. And, therefore, it is because this party is travelling in accordance with European custom that it has fallen to the visitors to commence the proceedings. Let me condense this portion of my remarks by simply saying that I indorse the welcome that has been given to the visitors. Welcome, Mr. Carroll, and welcome also to your companions who have travelled with you throughout the Island, and who have come here with you to let us know the plans that may or may not be advantageous to the Native people for the future. I desire that prosperity may be yours, and that God may give you many days. That is all I have to say by way of introduction. Now, I should like to speak about the subjects that the Commissioners have already mentioned to the people who are assembled here—the Ngatiraukawa. I am extremely pleased at your having come here, because it is by taking a course such as this that the thoughts of the people can best be ascertained, and that the subjects you are appointed to inquire into can be so laid before us as to be clearly apprehended, and the opinions which the people may have formed in relation to them fully stated. The only thing that I am dark about is the suddenness of your coming. If you had sent us notice during the past few weeks, and if you had apprised us beforehand of the objects of your intended visit, we should have had the requisite opportunity of assembling the people together in order to meet you. But, coming as you have in this unexpected manner, I am quite unable to see how the difficulty is to be surmounted. The notification that was given us, and what has been