

existing leases; then the position of those lessees whose leases have expired; the question of legislation next session; and the question of the rents which have accrued and are accruing. I may tell you, with regard to the rents, that the Public Trustee has a large amount of money at present in his hands, and he is prepared to pay that money over to the Natives. The rents that he has received are based on the old leases. The rents which would accrue under the new leases, of course, would have been more. That, however, is not our fault: we have not been able to issue the new leases. And then I would like to call your attention to the question of the leases. If you are agreeable to fresh leases being issued, whether these leases should be upon the improved value of the land or the unimproved value. Now, I want your answer upon these various questions; and if you would allow me to make a suggestion, I think it would be preferable for you to select two or three of your number to speak on these questions. Our time is comparatively limited, and it will save time, and lead, perhaps, to a clearer understanding, for a few of those who are most conversant with the matter to address the meeting. I will now leave the matter in your hands.

*Ngarangi* here rose on behalf of the Natives, and said: I am very pleased with the remarks you have made to the Natives. I wish to tell you I do not wish those gentlemen [meaning the reporters] to take down what is being said, for the reason that they hear all that is said between the two parties.

*Hon. the Premier*: I would like to say a word on that matter. The question was put to me whether the Press should be admitted to-day, and I replied that I thought the Press should be admitted; and I did so for this reason, in order to have a correct report of the proceedings go forth to the public, instead of a mutilated and incorrect report; for it is clear that if the Press were not here a garbled report of the proceedings would go forth to the public, of some sort or other. It would be impossible to keep the matter secret where there are so many involved.

*Ngarangi*: The reason I made this statement is because at the Arbitration Court we were not allowed to have persons to report our speeches—our reporters were turned out; that is the reason I made the request. We are desirous that you should give us half an hour, because some of the Natives have only just arrived; so that we may ascertain how we will proceed.

*Hon. the Premier*: Do they wish the meeting adjourned for half an hour?

*Ngarangi*: Yes.

*Hon. the Premier*: Certainly. I hope they will be punctual, because our time is limited.

(Meeting accordingly adjourned at 12.20, and was resumed at 12.40.)

*Ngarangi*: We have considered the remarks you have spoken. The first thing related to the improvements. These improvements are ours: they belong to the Maoris. There is nothing for these people to improve; our lands are already improved; we have improved them. Secondly, the money for the old leases, of which you hold possession, you say that the Public Trustee has; and we wish to disburse that money to the people to whom it belongs.

*Hon. the Premier*: The rents accrued?

*Ngarangi*: Yes. The leases that have expired. Let the people be put off that land: that was the original agreement between us—that is, between us and the leaseholders. That ends that part. Fourthly, with regard to any new arrangement between us, you say that you are prepared to bring in a Bill to meet our views—the views of both parties. If you will return the land to us, that statement would be a correct one.

*Hon. the Premier*: What statement?

*Ngarangi*: My desire is that the land, at the expiry of the leases, should be returned to us, so that we may confirm them.

*Hon. the Premier*: The leases going on now?

*Ngarangi*: That is, the confirmed leases. Fifthly, with regard to the renewing of the leases, what we have to say about that—

*Hon. the Premier*: I understand with regard to No. 3 that that deals with the expired leases?

*Ngarangi*: Yes.

*Hon. the Premier*: I am not sure about No. 4. You might explain again what you mean by No. 4.

*Ngarangi*: You have come here to arrange about a better law. The law that we think would be a good one is for the land to be returned to us—that is, to allow us to deal with our lands—that is, that the Public Trustee should have nothing more to do with them, because when it was placed in his hands it brought all this trouble between the Europeans and the Maoris.

*Hon. the Premier*: Now I will take No. 5.

*Ngarangi*: Fifth. That is where the Europeans are desirous to have renewed leases. This is what the tribe have to say about that: we would not agree to do it. Let the land be given over, so as to be divided—so that each one will know what his own share is. Because I know some at the present time that are landless—who have no land of their own. That is all I have to say upon that point. That is all.

*Ngapaki*: This is the first word I have to say: that you were a Minister in times past. The word of prayer we gave at that time we give at this present. All that you have said to-day in the presence of these Natives—all that you have stated to the Natives has been taken to Wellington, and has been before the Supreme Court. We have heard that we have won those cases. All that we are doing at the present time is waiting the return relative to these cases that have been won. That is, we want you to answer relative to that case—that case has been won, and what is the answer to it? Now, that case has been won. All that you have stated to us has already been before the Committee of the House in Wellington, and they have already expressed their views. This is what we have to say: First, we do not want these men, the leaseholders, to be in the midst of us, because we have lost a great deal by them in four years. If you cannot settle this matter on this day, there will be another contention in the House. That is all I have to say. May you all live!