

standing between you and others as your protectors, as a bulwark. We are standing between them and the Tuhoe, and if the Tuhoe take up a wrong position on the other side, it is impossible we can long stand the pressure that is being brought to bear, and then, when you say to me to-day, "We do not want anything further with regard to the surveys already made, let that stand, that is outside, there is nothing further to do," all I can say to you is, I will not be responsible, and you may rest assured upon this fact that if you maintain that position it means that wrongs are bound to accrue to the Tuhoe. It is only by getting the legal titles to that which belongs to you that the Government will be able to afford you protection. A legal title is in your favour, and cannot be disputed. In all countries now great changes are taking place, and in all countries where men and women live they must know definitely who are the owners of the land, and must have a legal title for those who own it. Now, in doing that, we do not desire in any way to take from you your rights, or to take from you your land, but the New Zealand Parliament has said by law, and the Queen who governs us all—you are her children as much as I am—has said, "We must ascertain the titles to all lands." It is here in the book. Under section 13 of the Native Land Purchase and Acquisition Act the following words are there enacted. "With respect to Native land, the Government may ask the Native Land Court to ascertain the titles thereto, and the Court may thereupon proceed so to do." Now, this is done to prevent one party who might want to take the land from the other without making application for it to be surveyed. Under the law as it now stands he cannot do that, but must apply to have it surveyed, and then it will come before the Court, and the Court will decide whose land it is. The Queen, who is the parent of all, has got this Act passed so that both parties may have fair-play. Now, I do not think that, at the meeting you held from the 1st February to the 4th March, those who came to the conclusions you have mentioned were aware that the Government, in the interest of the Native race, had asked Parliament to make this law. Had they known that this law existed they would perhaps have come to a different conclusion. Hence, I say, both sides should have been represented. Now, we will throw aside altogether any mystery or mystification, and I will say at once, I know one reason why the meeting decided to have no further surveys. It was because they were afraid that those who applied for them would be getting an advantage over the others, and they said, "We will have no surveys at all." Now, as I said to-day, wipe the past off the slate, and, as my colleague Mr Carroll said, make a fresh start. I am here to-day to see a clean slate: wipe the conclusions arrived at at the meeting from the 1st February to the 4th March from off it. Make a fresh start from to-day, and we will see that no one gets an advantage over the other. The Queen will see the right people get the land, and I say so on the part of the Government. The impression that has been formed has, I know, done a great deal in passing these resolutions, they were passed in ignorance of the law and the intentions of the Government. Hence, I say again, wipe out what was done at that meeting, and go on the lines others are going, so that your future, and the future of your children, may be preserved in peace and happiness. You may fear that, in these particular surveys, wrong may be done you. In that respect the Government will be responsible, and see that the persons who make those surveys are men that the Government can rely upon, and who will not do injustice to any one. The Government will see that the expenses incurred are not such as shall eat up the land, but the work shall be done at the lowest possible cost. The Government have no interest in wronging those who come under their protection, but have every desire to see that your interests are conserved. We are not here to destroy; we are here to build up and preserve. I now come to the question of the Courts that have to decide these questions for survey. I am prepared to bring the Court here, to this particular spot, in this very building, so as to save expense, and keep you here amongst yourselves, so that, whilst having your rights adjusted, you shall not be driven to other places, put to expense, and made to suffer the evils you do in the towns. If that had been done in the past many evils which the Natives have suffered would never have occurred. Again I say that, with these privileges granted you, those who do not desire to have the surveys made or have their titles ascertained are afraid. And if they are not afraid, then they are doing themselves an incalculable wrong, because they are weakening their position. The next question is as to the sale of the lands. As the law stands, the Natives are not compelled to sell their lands, they can lease them, and avoid selling. When the titles are ascertained, a majority of the owners can decide, after election, in what way they will deal with the lands, and the prices upon which the lands are to be leased is agreed upon by a Board on which the Natives themselves have fair representation. In making these provisions the Parliament has decided that if you want to have committees of advice comprised of the owners you can have these committees. You can all meet in a room like this—all the owners, and a majority can decide what you will do. If you say, "We will sell," the Government will say, "Very well." If you say "No, we will lease to the Government," well and good. If two-thirds of a majority say, "We want this land submitted to public auction and get the best possible price for selling or leasing," then the law says, "If you prefer that, you can do so"—that is, if you prefer it to dealing with the Government. And after doing this the Government has also conserved your rights, because, as stated to me, you have said there are many who have disposed of their lands who are now landless and penniless. Now, we have made provision to stop that. I admit that Natives have taken moneys in other places for their lands, and have squandered that money. But we have made provision against that, because we have said, instead of getting the money so as to squander it, we give part in cash and part in debentures. These debentures bear interest, and you draw the interest every year as long as you live, and your children who come after you. That is better than allowing the land to be idle. The interest on these debentures can only be paid to the owners of the land, and no one else. By the principle upon which the land is either sold or leased, neither you nor your children who come after you can ever be penniless or in want, and even though you become bankrupt, owe money, or a judgment is given against you, that money is not transferable, is not attachable, and can only be paid to the