

I will tell you how far we can go, and I will tell you what may be in your interests in respect to the same. But above all things I want to remove the impression that has gone abroad, and that is, that the Natives cannot get justice from the Europeans and from Parliament. You have taken up a negative position hitherto, and in taking up that negative position pressure is becoming so strong behind the Government—the changes coming over the country are so great—that unless you consider your situation at once and act quickly in the right direction disaster will be bound to follow and you will be responsible for it. To stand still any longer means to recede. You must progress, we not do want to see you recede, we do not want you to be wiped, as it were, from off the face of the earth—not by pestilence, by sickness, not by any action of the Europeans, but by yourselves. You yourselves are day by day the cause of the reduction in your numbers. We must go to the root of the disease. You want hope, you want something to look forward to—some ideal. To you at the present time all is dark, all is blank, there is no hope in the breasts of the rising generation of the Native race. Where are the cultivations to-day compared with what they were a few years ago? Ask your chiefs to compare the present condition with what it was when they were youths. The next session of the New Zealand Parliament will be one of the most important that has ever taken place in New Zealand as affecting the Native race. We say that faith must be kept, that the solemn pledge that was given on both sides when the Treaty of Waitangi was signed must be kept. We say the Treaty of Waitangi must be maintained, and that the present condition of affairs must not continue further. I thank you very heartily for the welcome you have given me, and I am sure that what takes place here to-day will have a favourable bearing on all concerned. In other places the Natives have told me their troubles, like one who is about to face the world and is anxious to travel on the right road, they have confided in me. Although grievances differ in one district and another, I do not find them irreconcilable altogether. If you tell me your troubles I shall then be able to compare your grievances with what I have heard elsewhere, I shall hear from you what you believe will redress those grievances, and when I go back to Wellington and prepare legislation for next session, which I hope will not run counter with your suggestions, something might be done under which the colony will prosper. I am not boasting when I tell you we have at the present time the strongest Government that was ever in New Zealand, and with that great strength we desire to be just and fair to the Native race. We are the first Government since 1877 that has had a Native representative in the Cabinet. There is my friend Mr. Carroll, one of yourselves, and, without at all flattering my colleague, he is one who from his first start in Parliament has ever tried to put the Natives on an equal footing with the Europeans, and endeavoured to pass laws which would have the same effect on both. We have his assistance therefore in Cabinet, and have him here to-day to assist us. You can speak to him like a brother, one who has the interest of the Native race at heart. In his face, in his thoughts, and in his form there are the two races united. You do not find the two bloods quarrelling. When you look at his person you see a wholesome blend, the two races are there working in harmony together. It shows that the European and the Native race can mix with satisfactory results, and the product of such union is apparently free from sickness of body or sickness of mind. We may differ when speaking to each other later on, but you know my wishes towards you are good, and your wishes towards me and my race are also good, and if we exchange thoughts as men desirous of doing good, benefit must result therefrom. We want everything scanned by the light of day, and by the intelligence of the country, nothing done in darkness, nothing done in secret. What we do here to-day the world will know of just as well as I shall, and these proceedings will be read by the people of both races. I shall probably determine that what takes place here shall be translated into the Native language, and circulated through the country. I shall conclude for the present by thanking you for the hearty welcome you have accorded me. (Loud cheers.)

The Hon. Mr. Carroll then addressed the meeting at great length, and in a most earnest and eloquent speech urged the Natives to take the advice of his colleague the Premier, and endeavour to thresh out something of a practical nature which would be of advantage to all. He was well received, and loudly cheered at the conclusion. An adjournment was now made to a large house, where a capital lunch was provided. The Native women were untiring in their efforts to make everything pass off well. Over two hundred sat down, and, considering the short notice, it is marvellous how they could have produced such a repast, and it went to show that the Native lady can on such occasions rise equal to her European sister.

On resuming,

Wiremu Katene said,—This is the first time we have had the pleasure of hearing members of the Government address us at such length and so ably. The people all here present have some matters to place before you to-day, but since we have had dinner I hear some of them are low-spirited at the prospect of there not being sufficient time at your disposal to hear all they have to say. I am now speaking for them. I think we should be able to dispose of all the business this afternoon. If so, well and good, but if we are unable to get through the whole of our business this afternoon we request that you will stay here to-night. We have several questions to discuss here to-day, and unless there is time given we shall not be able to go into the details. I should like to hear the Premier state whether he can stay so as to get through these matters.

The Premier. It is no use my coming here and going away unless we have business done that is satisfactory to both. I am not like a shooting star—simply seen for a few moments and then disappear. (Cheers.) I am not afraid to travel even in the night. We will go on with the business, and you will be the best judges whether we have gone through it or not. If we go to work like business men and confine ourselves to business we shall do some good. To save time we will proceed, and if I can get through to-night, well and good. I am prepared to stay late and work late, and if I get at Rawene at daylight to-morrow that will suit me. I am prepared to work all night.

Pene Tau said,—The first question is this. I would like you to answer the question that I asked you at Waimate—that is, in reference to the Native Land Purchase and Acquisition Act.