

Wiremu Komene : Reference is made to section 16. It is unfair that advances should be made to Natives where they have transferred their land for leasing purposes. There is some provision in that section whereby advances can be made from time to time to Natives while such land is undealt with. The land itself will have to pay these advances, and will be the means of the departure of that land from the Native ownership.

The Premier The position is very plain here, and I will give you the reason why this was urged upon the Government and Parliament. It was said that the Natives want money, and to prevent their selling the land and getting the money and spending it foolishly, if they were to offer the land for lease, and, while waiting for the land to be taken up, the Government should advance to them some moneys to keep them pending tenants coming forward. You will see how fair this is to you. You have forgotten the most material part, that you can borrow money at 4 per cent. The Government advance you money at 4 per cent. If you had to borrow from the pakehas they would charge you 10 per cent. Now the money is a first charge upon the rents. If you would say to me to-day, "We do not want to get money at 4 per cent. when we offer the land for leasing; we do not want the money at all," we will strike that out. The pakehas in the House fought against this, and the Government had to remain very firm to get this through for you. You see it is only a first charge upon the rents, it has nothing to do with the purchase of the land, unless under section 26 you desire to sell the land by auction, it would then be payable out of the purchase-money. I do not think, myself, that the owners would care to sell to the Government if they could borrow money at 4 per cent. When the local bodies want to borrow money from the Government they have to pay 5 per cent. If the Natives have to borrow money from the money-lender they have to pay 8 and 10 per cent. If you get credit from the storekeeper, he charges you 20 per cent. If you say you do not want the Government to give you credit at 4 per cent., then they will strike it out. I look upon this as the most favourable clause in the Bill to the Natives.

Wiremu Komene Why should that provision be made in the Act where it empowers the Government, in paying the proceeds of the land to the Natives, to pay half in debentures, which debentures, with the balance, are to be vested in the Public Trustee? I am questioning the principle of debentures embodied in the Act, it is under section 17. Why should the money be paid in debentures? I consider the Natives are quite able to look after their interests and any money in case they required the use of the money.

The Premier The answer to the question is that the Government decided in section 17 that, notwithstanding any of the provisions of this Act, the Governor may, with respect to any capital moneys arising from any land acquired under this Act, direct any portion thereof not exceeding one-half to be paid to the Public Trustee, to be held and applied, both as to capital and income, upon such terms and subject to such conditions for the benefit of the persons entitled as the Governor may think proper, and the Governor may from time to time make or alter such terms and conditions. We have cases in point we have the wretched past before us, and it is no use you standing up there and telling me that the Natives are able to look after their own moneys, because we have paid some thousands of pounds to the Natives. I have just now come through the Moawhanga district a district just beyond Hunterville. We have paid there £90,000, and I have met some of the Natives with not an acre of land, not a pound in their pockets, their money all gone—worse than before they received it. And this section only applies to an amount not exceeding one-half, so that if a Native sold one hundred pounds' worth of land he would receive £50 cash, and, if the Governor thought fit, £50 in debentures. It would be the same as putting £50 in the bank, because you are to receive interest from the Public Trustee; you do not put your money there and get no interest upon it. It is an insurance, and you receive interest on it for all time, yourself and your children after you, and it is not attachable for debt. Do you want the money to go and squander in drink? Is it not better to prevent them squandering their means, and make provision so that they will have something to live upon in their old age? The land cannot be swallowed, but the money you might "swallow." Every year when the interest comes due you will find it very nice to receive your interest, which cannot be attached. You will say it is a good Government and a good people who made that provision for you.

Wiremu Komene Now, with regard to those owners—minors and others—not capable of acting for themselves. It would be advisable that their share of the purchase-money or proceeds of the land should be handed over to trustees of the minors.

The Premier I cannot agree with you, and I will tell you why. We know many cases where money has been handed over to the trustees and the trustees have spent it, and when the minors came of age they had no money. The trustees said, "You can take us, but the money is gone. The law of your ancestors who had an interest in the land said the land should belong to him and his heirs. If the land belonged to the parents altogether, then the children would not be in the certificate of title. The parents have no right to get that money and be able to spend it. What is the good of your children being in the certificate of title if you afterwards say the money must go to the parents? Better save trouble and say the certificate of title shall be given only to the parents. But if the land belongs to the children it should be preserved to them until they come of age, and if they then like to give it to the parents, well and good, but it has always been the duty of the State to preserve the interest of those who are not able to look after themselves—I mean the minors and infants. And I will not believe that the Natives have changed their minds, and want to give the proceeds to trustees or parents, so that they can spend the proceeds. The Ngatimaniapotos were very firm in this respect—they would not hear of trustees taking the interests of persons whose lands were purchased by the Government—they insisted on every one having his individual rights. I know cases where there are Natives who ought to be very well to do to-day, and through trustees squandering their moneys and getting their names put in the certificates of titles they lost their land and are now paupers. That must not occur again.