

The Premier I can put you right, and I shall not expound the law wrongly. Having been one who was in Parliament when this clause was passed, I can tell you the mind of Parliament at the time. It is quite true that a policeman or a dog-tax collector can kill an unregistered dog on the road, and he may also kill an unregistered dog on other property, not being the property of the owner. But it would be a most dangerous thing if the law was to be interpreted in the way you indicate, because a dog-tax collector might come to a pa, ask for the tax, and see a dog there and shoot it. It might be a favourite dog; the owner might lose his temper, and there might be worse trouble arise. It is not the duty of the police or the dog-tax collector to go round the country, and, if he cannot get the money, to go shooting the dogs, if he did so, he would be breaking the law.

Wiremu Komene The law has been interpreted to us by the authorities inside out, to suit themselves. If we wished to give up the dogs when the collector comes round, the collector would have to take the dog, and shoot it if we refused to pay.

The Premier If that was the law I would tell you so.

Wiremu Komene It has been interpreted to me so, and the interpretation is certainly that, and it is in the *Gazette*.

The Premier The *Gazette* is only a copy of the law. The *Gazette* does not give the power, nor can it make the law.

Wiremu Komene We have been under this impression, and people have gone to gaol on account of this misinterpretation.

The Premier The only one who can interpret the law is the Magistrate.

Wiremu Komene Now, my prayer to you is this. My brothers and uncles are now in prison through being misled, and I now pray that you will let them out. They have served a certain time. I hope you will now let them out.

The Premier The question now raised is asking for the clemency of the Crown. The clemency of the Crown can only be exercised on a petition being sent through the Minister of Justice to the Governor. When that petition is received, and when we find that the Natives, now they know the law, are prepared to obey it literally, that would weigh with the Governor as to whether he would grant the clemency asked for. I have heard your explanation, and we will look into the matter if you petition for the release of your friends. You cannot escape paying the dog-tax any more than the Europeans. If you have more dogs than are useful to you, destroy those which are of no use. They can only make you pay on dogs that are alive. They cannot make you pay on dead dogs. In former days your forefathers required a lot of dogs, because the dogs helped them in getting food. I do not like seeing so many dogs about the Native pas. I would rather see children. If the Europeans kept proportionately as many dogs as the Natives, I do not know what would become of the country. You are now getting sheep, and you will want good dogs to look after them. I am glad to see you are going in now for sheep. In some places in the South Island they make them pay 10s. for a dog. Here, I believe, it is only 5s.—just half. But this is a matter more for the local bodies. The dog-tax goes to help to keep our roads in repair, so if a man pays 5s. for the dog-tax he pays it for keeping the roads in repair. If he does not like to pay this tax he can get his dog destroyed, or destroy it himself, and need not pay the tax. That is a matter for the owners to settle among themselves. But we do not wish—the Government does not wish—neither do the local bodies wish—we none of us wish, in carrying out the law, to act harshly towards you. But when the law is defied, and you take up a defiant attitude, there is nothing else for it but for the Magistrate to do his duty. If you have made a mistake, and did not take the warning that was given you at first, and you now see that you made a mistake, the only chance of having the punishment mitigated is by petition to the Governor. Now you might say, supposing the Governor was to give you a reprieve, or to mitigate the punishment, “We do not care for the Magistrate, the Governor will see us free, we will go and break the law again.” If you approach the Governor in that spirit I may tell you at once your friends will not be set free, but if you approach the Governor and say, “We were misled, we now see the law is against us, we wish to obey the law,” there will be no further trouble, then the Governor may see his way to mitigate the punishment. I shall therefore await the petition, but you must clearly understand the spirit in which it must come. If you take up a defiant attitude, and defy the law, I would be sorry for you to do so. The law must be supreme. It is the law of the Queen and the law of the country and is as much for your protection as the protection of the pakeha. Without the law we should none of us be safe—neither our wives, children, or our properties. I hope you will therefore see the position, and recognise this after you have reasoned the matter over with yourselves. You will find it is really in your interest that the majesty of the law is maintained.

Wiremu Komene. I will send the petition to the Governor, but it certainly will not go upon the lines that we wish to defy the law or the Magistrate, nothing of the kind.

The Premier I am very pleased to hear that.

Wiremu Komene When I pointed out this section to the Magistrate it was exactly as you interpreted it—it was only for the dogs straying about. The petition will go from Kaikohe, Te Ringa, and Otawa.

Te Waru I was going to have a long talk over the Native Land Purchase and Acquisition Act. Now seeing that the whole thing is made plain to us, there is nothing for me to do but submit amendments to you when writing. All these people assembled here to-day wish it to be left under section 14, and not to go any further. I wish this law not to allude to any pas or cultivations. I do not wish the latter part of the section to come in where the Governor is allowed to adjudicate. Section 11—In case the land is leased, all the expenses shall be defrayed by the owners. This presses very heavily on the Natives. One of the Native grievances is that they are not able to settle their own people on their own land. The rates and taxes are so heavy on the lands. This is one of the oppressions—the surveys, and of the expenses put upon the land when it is transferred. The stamp duties and succession duties really go to