

The Premier They have all made reference to their grievances in respect to some surplus land. It would be best for them to name all the different blocks in which they have been wronged, and it would only be a duty for the Government, or myself as representing the Government, to take up the information given here to-day to Wellington and place it before the Government there for their consideration, and we may find out there whether it is worth while setting up a Court of inquiry into these different blocks. The proper course to pursue is to take a typical case and send it on to Wellington. I might forget what has been said to me to-day, but if they reduce their grievances respecting the particular blocks to writing it then becomes a matter of record, and the Government could look into it and decide accordingly.

Hone Peti I have a request to make to the Premier in reference to the subject I am about to submit to him. I do not wish it to be treated in the same manner as one would treat any ordinary subject, as when meeting one along the road—a mere exchange of words, but I would like the history of this case inquired into at the present time. The case I am about to refer to is that of the Puketotara Block, about which I visited Wellington and presented a petition, and I discussed the matter with members outside the House. While there I also asked that any decision on my petition might be withheld until a member of the Ministry should have an opportunity of visiting the locality and gaining information in connection with the land. The Hon. the Minister of Lands appeared at Waimate, and we assembled in his presence and discussed this subject. After he had heard what we had to say, he stated that on his return to Wellington he would meet his colleagues in Cabinet and give the matter his attention. He was to inform me of the decision arrived at by his Government, but from that time to this no word has reached me. I explained all the particulars and matters in detail which constituted this subject. If the Premier would like me to give him a sketch of the history of this case now I will do so.

The Premier: Has it already been recorded? If it is already in the petition it is no use my worrying you by letting you give me the details. I shall see whether it is in the petition, and, if so, I will inquire why the matter has not been attended to.

Hone Peti I do not know whether all the particulars were taken down at that interview, but I know that the Commissioner of Crown Lands was present. Whether it was Mr Mueller I cannot say at present, and I cannot say whether every particular was noted at that time. The petition was presented to Parliament. The land is known by the name of Puketotara. It was formerly sold to the early settlers who visited this colony. It was sold by people other than the owners. We—that is to say, our old people and our forefathers, who were the residential people located on the land—did not sell it. When they heard of the sale perpetrated by another hapu they took steps to resent it, but they found that those who had sold the land had decamped with the purchase-money of the European, and the European would not give up the land, although it had been sold by persons that had no right to sell. They pacified some of our people by bribing them and by giving them presents, but that did not satisfy the whole of the people, and that land remained a subject of dispute up to the year 1850. The people who owned the land had been living all this time on it and cultivating it. In that year we, who had gone up with our own people, went and gave notice to the European of our objecting to the European title to the land vesting in him, and requested him to give up the land, which had been wrongly sold. We went every year for six years to protest. At last he agreed to give a portion of the land sold by our people to him in lieu of that which had been wrongly sold by the people I have mentioned. This was agreed upon, and, together with ourselves, he went on to the land and marked off the portion to be given back to us. After that certain surveys were prosecuted in this part of the Island. I believe they were the first surveys ever done in the colony. William Clarke was the name of the surveyor. When the land-surveying, as I have mentioned, started in this district he was the surveyor, and these surveys were instigated by the missionaries, and as the survey was made identical with the lines agreed upon, it marked off the piece to be returned to us. A year after this we undertook the survey of this portion which we were to have, and completed it, and submitted the land to the Native Land Court, the presiding Judge of which was Mr Maning. The investigation proceeded before Judge Maning, and the whole case was heard throughout. Judgment was suspended, and during this suspension Mr Kemp came forward and objected. He objected to the survey-line encroaching upon his piece, and asked that it should be adjusted. Mr Kemp said his son would go and set the boundary-line right, and afterwards would proceed with the case. Mr Maning agreed to that, and, in consequence of a dispute amongst ourselves that arose about that time, we failed to go and set the survey-line right, and we allowed the matter to stand over in that position, but we leased the land, and it was under lease by us up to the years 1889 and 1890, and when Mr Smith, Chief Judge of the Native Land Court, came to Rawene I asked him to explain the position of that land, but he said to me, "Wait until I return to Auckland, and I will look up the particulars in the department, and let you know the position of it." The Government had made a claim to the land about this time. When the Chief Judge returned to Auckland he wrote to us, and informed us that he had looked the matter up, and attached to his letter a memorandum written by Judge Heale. He said the land did not belong to the Government. Now, at that time Mr. Heale was Surveyor-General of the colony. He was afterwards appointed Judge of the Native Land Court, and it was when he was head of the Survey Department, I presume, that he wrote that minute in respect to the land not belonging to the Government. After this we applied for the Court to sit, and decide. Judge Puckey proceeded to inquire into the title of the land. On the second day of the investigation by the Court a reply was sent by the Government to say it was Crown land, and could not be dealt with. The Court had gone so far as to accept the lease of the owners, and had made a special division of the land between the owners, when this wire came from the Government asking what jurisdiction the Court had to deal with it. That wire was replied to by Judge Puckey, and subsequently a wire came from the Government saying the proceedings should be delayed while inquiries were made by the Government. In consequence of this wire from