

the Government judgment was suspended, and we have waited for some information from the Government as to the result of their inquiries. Nothing followed, nothing was done. I then sent a letter to the Government asking them to inquire into the matter, the usual reply was given—that they did not see fit to consider the matter, and there was nothing done. Then I drew up a petition as already referred to, and submitted it to Parliament. This is a very strong case, and the grounds which support it are stronger than the generality of such cases under the circumstances. Much land has gone from us. We have lived on that land, we have always lived on it and cultivated it down to the time we sent in our petition. This, Premier is the position of this case. I have waited for some word from the Hon. the Minister of Lands, I have received none. All through the time of last Parliament no word has come to me. If he is still in power I have received nothing by way of information. That was during the time of the last Government. Now that the Premier is here I respectfully pray that he will take this matter into his consideration—now a new Government is formed, and the Premier is here in person, and he has already intimated that he will study it carefully and give attention to our grievances. I may add also that when the Government were cutting up land in this district for settlement purposes I wrote to the Government asking them to forbear selling any land identical with this block, until this question has been settled. I have received no word, and they have not stopped their proceedings. When the Native Land Laws Commission sat here, and Mr Rees was Chairman, a selector was looking for a portion of land whereon to settle. I saw that Commissioner and sent word to the Government to stop the European selector, but this matter was not gone into. The Commissioner took no steps in the matter. All this time there have been European selectors selecting portions for themselves. On each occasion we have asked that they should hold aloof until these grievances of ours had been adjusted. I want you, the Premier, to give attention to this. I wish to describe to you how the old sales were carried on in the old days. The European purchasers came round and found the people of the settlement away on their business, and they bought from those who were at the settlement, while part of the owners were away. Thus were these lands acquired. I think it is only right in the case of this surplus land that the Natives and their descendants should be allowed to participate in them. I want you, as head of this Government, to give full consideration to the claims of the Natives. The Government are losing nothing by it—they never paid for it, it is a limitation of area and surplus, and all such surplus, I think, should go back to the Natives. This is the full burden of my prayer. This portion of land should be given back to the Natives, they having previously sold it to him in lieu of land which had been wrongfully sold to him.

The Premier I have listened patiently to all you have had to say. What is the name of the block? What is the area of the land involved?

Hone Peti The Puketotara. The area is 4,000 acres.

The Premier This is the first I have heard of it, and I can say no more than this—that I will look into the papers and see how the matter stands. At any rate, you shall receive a reply. I do not think it is right to keep matters in suspense and doubt. The sooner it is settled one way or the other the better. In regard to the question of surplus land, I know it is a very large question and requires very careful handling. I will also go into that matter and discuss it with the Minister of Lands. The circumstances are so altered now, owing to the time that has elapsed, that it is difficult to deal with, and almost impossible to go back to it. What applies more particularly to the first case gives great force to what I said to-day—this constant holding over of titles. If the titles had been ascertained years ago this trouble could never have taken place, and the longer this question is left over the more difficult it is to deal with—I mean the question of ascertaining the titles to land. Hence what I urge upon the Natives and Europeans, and all concerned, is that the sooner we ascertain the titles to all the land, the sooner we shall be able to do justice to all parties. You may rest assured I will go into the matter most carefully, because I desire to do what is just. You have not told me what the result of your petition to Parliament was.

Hone Peti I could not tell you what the result of that petition was, but when I left Wellington the intention was to refer the matter in the usual way for inquiry.

The Premier Who was the member representing the district when you presented it?

Hone Peti The first year Te Kapa represented us in Parliament. I forwarded that petition to Parliament through Hone Taipua, and when I was in Wellington they both told me they had presented the petition, but the Committee had not gone into it. While I was there, I may mention that I told them not to hurry on the investigation of the petition, so as to allow me time to interview the Minister of Lands. I returned at this stage to my own home and waited the arrival of the Minister of Lands.

The Premier I will ascertain whether the Committee inquired into the matter, and whether the petition still remains to be dealt with. It might require renewing. If presented the session before last it would not require renewing. I will inquire into the matter, and you shall hear from me some little time after I return to Wellington.

Hone Peti I am satisfied. I make this last suggestion. It is for you to consider whether any importance can be attached to it. It is an important question—whether the Government see their way clear to appoint some tribunal to investigate the matter and set it at rest. I do not mean that the Government should appoint any commission to investigate these matters and let the cost fall upon us. Possibly the Government may be able to appoint some one with authority to go into the question on both sides. It is futile to approach Parliament by way of petition. Nothing comes of it. I simply throw this out as a suggestion.

The Premier All will depend upon the investigation. There are other interests in other blocks similarly situated—you have simply indicated this as a typical case. You had better send down a list of subjects to me at Wellington.

Raniera I understand now that we have arrived at the end of our business, and that you are going to have something to eat, and proceed on your journey. I am very pleased that the result of our talk has been the opening up of a path by which we can send our communications in