

14. Well, now, outside of that, and irrespective of questions such as that—I mean to say matters of that kind of management of land we have been speaking of—would you advocate that the Board should be given any other powers similar to those which are placed in the Crown Lands Boards of the colony, if those laws were modified here and there so as to be adaptable to the wishes of the Natives?—I am quite willing such powers should be given to the Board as would enable them to act in whatever direction might be desired by the owners of any land submitted to their control and management.

15. How would you have this Board or Council constituted: should it be all Maoris or partly Europeans?—Personally, I do not consider that a matter of very serious importance. If they are to be Europeans, I say let them be Europeans. If there is to be a majority of Europeans and a minority of Maori on the Board or body, I am willing that that should be so; or if the House decides that the majority of the members of such a tribunal should be Maoris, and the minority Europeans, that is equally acceptable, because I know that that would meet the wishes of the Maori people. But if this Board is to undertake the powers and functions of the Native Land Court, then I would advocate that the Maoris should be in the majority. I say that if the Board is constituted and set up, never mind what powers may be vested in it, and the right of option is given to the people who own the lands either to take their lands before the Board or keep them away from its operations—if that is done, then I say there is no necessity for me to stipulate or make it a condition as to how the Board should be constituted because, having made it optional with the owners of the land, it then remains for them to consider whether they think it is desirable to place their land under the operation of that Board or not.

*Mr. R. Monk:* Mr. Chairman, I want to make a suggestion to this Committee, as the result of what I have experienced during the three sessions of this Parliament. Really, what comes before any Native Affairs Committee with reference to the alteration in the operations of the present laws upon the Native lands is simply the result of a conviction in the minds of the Natives that they have not been dealt fairly with by ourselves—that is, by our Governments; I am not blaming any particular Government. Now, Mr. Chairman, I believe that the only method of securing relief to the Natives is, in the first place, to make them feel that their rights, and their property, and their lands are as equitably secured to them as the rights are secured in the lands that the Europeans own. And I believe that the Bill which will meet the case must be a Bill something like this: that the Government will give the Natives absolute free-trade in their lands, subject to the restrictions which I shall presently mention—that is, that the Native lands must not be leased or alienated excepting under the conditions which now apply to Crown lands; the quantity of land that may be taken up not to exceed the areas prescribed in the Land for Settlements Act, according to the quality of the land. It may be smaller if they like. Such regulations will enable the Natives at once to feel that they are not subjected to any inequality or disparagement as compared with their European brethren. Now, the proposed Native Committee or Native Board constituted by the operation of law, I believe, would lead to confusion.

*The Chairman:* Pardon me interrupting you, Mr. Monk, but the idea in receiving these petitions from the Natives was to get the Natives' views on this question.

*Mr. Monk:* I am trying to crystallize what I believe are the Native views, with a desire to save time.

*The Chairman:* After the Natives have expressed their views it will then be for the European members of the Committee to reconcile any differences of opinion expressed by the Native representatives, and thus mould something definite for the Committee to discuss.

*Mr. Monk:* I just want to add this, Mr. Chairman: I believe that the Natives require to set up, voluntarily among themselves, Native Boards. I think that will relieve them of an immense amount of loss which we have noticed the Natives are suffering from under the uncertainties of the decisions of the Native Land Courts. If the Natives would set up among themselves, without an Act of Parliament, their own Committees, and determine who were the owners of their various blocks of lands before they went before the Native Land Boards, having such decisions written out and signed by the owners-elect, it would save a great deal of loss to them, and by that means the Natives will avoid the litigation—the number of appeal cases which are now brought before us year after year—before this Committee—they will be avoided, and the expense and loss to the Natives will be prevented. Then, in addition to this Act, there should be very careful supervision to insure that the Natives be not allowed to pauperise themselves by selling out the whole of their lands, as they have been doing, in many cases, particularly during the last nine or ten years. Now, Mr. Chairman, I think I have put in a few sentences what should be the framework of an Act of Parliament which should meet the views of the Natives, and encourage them to believe that we desire to deal properly and fairly with them. I believe a Board would only lead to cost and confusion, and would result in valueless expenditure. There should be a Land Court only for confirming the title.

THURSDAY, 21st SEPTEMBER, 1899.

Mr. W. PERE examined.

*The Chairman:* Has Mr. W. Pere anything to say on the petition before the Committee?

*Mr. Pere:* I shall say what I have to say in support of the Board Bill—the Board Bill which was brought down last year by the Premier. I have been devoting my time during the present session of Parliament with a view to obtain the inclusion in that Bill of such of the amendments passed by the Papawai hui as it is advisable should be adopted. That Bill, and the amendments arrived at by the Papawai hui are contained in the report of the Native Affairs Com-