

system of self-government. New Zealand had an Agent there, and there need be no change whatever in this respect. They could be given, with slight modifications, their local Council, which they asked for in their petition." The understanding was clear. It was confirmed by the Act of 1915, which, while it altered the constitution of the Council, made no provision for European representation. That is the position as regards the understanding at the time. In the Act it is provided, I believe, that additional members of the Council—the Arikis are members by right of their rank—may be either elected or nominated. The New Zealand Parliament therefore evidently contemplated that the nominative system might some day be replaced by the elective principle. We heard this morning from the Arikis that they were very much troubled over their loss of mana. That loss of mana has taken place, I believe, very largely through the individualization of the land-titles. I presume they will lose still more mana if we take away from them the right of nomination of members of the Council. It is obvious to us New-Zealanders that there are many objections to the nominated system, and that it would perhaps be in the interests of the Arikis themselves if they would agree to the elective principle with regard to the three other representatives on the Council.

Mr. PLATTS: I believe they would.

Hon. Sir JAMES ALLEN: If that cannot be done, what I am prepared to do and what Mr. Platts is prepared to accept is this: I am prepared to accept three selected whites, who shall be an advisory body, having the right of direct communication with the Commissioner. I do not say that that will be a satisfactory solution. It may only fill the gap until we can get representation. I doubt very much whether the whites will be satisfied with being on the Native roll; but, at any rate, we shall remove the objection that the principle is not carried out of representation where there is taxation. I am not myself placing much faith in this document that we have had placed before us—the photographed petition—and I do not think it has been quite a piece of clean work. As to the other matters that were dealt with by the traders and others, I would remind you that we have our Trade Commissioners with us. These gentlemen have come to hear the details of your difficulties with regard to trade, and produce, and shipping. If you will select one, or two, or three of your members to go and see them and place the facts before them, they will listen to you gladly. We will not deal with the matter finally until we have had their report. Mr. Platts himself has dealt with most of the other questions. I think I said, with regard to the re-lease of the wharves to the Union Company, that no action is going to be taken by the Government; the lease to the company it is intended to continue. With respect to your schools, you know that we have started an education system here, and Inspector Bird is here to-day. He was with you in 1913. He will report as to the progress of your schools and the requirements of the future. All I wish to say to you whites is this: you realize the difficulties there are in administering these islands; you realize the difficult position of the Resident Commissioner. He has his duty to the Native population: to protect them is his chief duty, and the New Zealand Government will uphold him so long as he is justly and rightly conserving the rights of the Natives. He is also here to assist you as far as he can. May I hope that as a result of our visit and our very candid talk to-day there may be established a more friendly relationship between the whites and the Natives and the Commissioner. My judgment of Mr. Platts is that he is very earnest in his work and keen to do what is right. We all make mistakes. Well, forgive mistakes, if there are mistakes, and trust to the future that Mr. Platts will carry out what he suggested to you—that he will be only too glad to help you in any way he can so long as that assistance does not interfere with his duty towards the Native population. We will at once set up the Advisory Board, if you think that is of any value. If it is set up I would ask that the members of the Board should not treat Mr. Platts as hostile to them, but should go to him with a friendly feeling and offer sound advice. If that advice is good and is not to the detriment of the Natives I am sure it will be listened to and acted upon, and the New Zealand Government will be advised by Mr. Platts whenever necessary. We shall discuss these things among ourselves when we get back; but may we go away with the assurance that you will shake hands and help one another to promote the prosperity of the islands and good fellowship between yourselves and the Native population? Then we shall feel that our visit has been of material benefit to our own country and to you.

Mr. FISHER: You have asked a direct question, Sir James. May I reply by saying that we shall never cease to ask for a Commission of Inquiry to be appointed.

Hon. Sir JAMES ALLEN: You have the inquiry here.

Mr. FISHER: We want an inquiry into the administration.

Mr. YOUNG: I wish to ask the Commissioner a question. Regarding the meetings which the Arikis have called among the people to make recommendations for the Council: what form did that consultation take? Did it take the form of meetings publicly called so that Mr. William Browne or any other gentleman could be there to take part?

Mr. PLATTS: I really do not know.

Mr. YOUNG: You assured us that the public of these districts were consulted publicly?

Mr. PLATTS: That is so.

Mr. YOUNG: What form of public meeting or consultation took place?

Mr. PLATTS: All I know is that they had meetings in their settlements about it.

Mr. BROWNE: There was no meeting in Avarua, and never has been one.

Mr. PLATTS: What you say is contrary to what I say, and I have no personal knowledge.

Mr. YOUNG: In the course of your address, Mr. Platts, you assured us that you were friendly to the trader, and you wanted the trader to be satisfied with one profit only—namely, the profit he makes in selling goods to the people here. You objected to his making any profit in the matter of the purchase of goods from the Natives for sale elsewhere. These traders have invested capital in their businesses. Do you think it fair that the businesses should be confiscated and