

was tacitly admitted by Aperahama Te Huruhuru and Nepia that although they were now opposing the sale they could not suggest any other way of settling their quarrel with the Ngatiapa.

About 3 p.m., Dr. Featherston rose and made the following speech, which was interpreted to the meeting by Mr. Buller, R.M. After expressing his gratification at seeing, for the first time, all the tribes engaged in the dispute before him, and at the friendly relations that had been established between them, he said that he felt confident, from the opinions that had been expressed, and from the conciliatory spirit with which the discussion had been conducted, that the time had arrived for finally closing the dispute. As long as the tribes refused to meet each other the negotiations would have been indefinitely prolonged. Ihakara and other speakers had given a truthful history of the dispute, and he had little or nothing to add to it, but as there were many present whom he had not met at previous meetings he was anxious that it should be made clear to all how it was that he first came as a mediator between them—how it was that he came to be dragged into this long-standing quarrel. Not one of them dared to assert that he had ever asked them to hand over either the quarrel or the land into his hands. Not one of them dared deny that the three tribes had themselves forced upon him, whether he liked it or not, both the quarrel and the land in dispute. On the contrary, Ihakara and others have declared that he had appeared amongst them only after all other mediators had failed in persuading them to desist from appealing to arms for the settlement of the dispute. But he had not come up of his own accord or uninvited. He came up at the request both of the tribes and of the Government. Why had they invited him? Was it not because during a long period they had ever regarded him as their friend—as one who had ever advocated what he believed to be their true interests—as one in whose justice and integrity they had implicit faith? Why had the Government urged him to undertake such a difficult mission? Simply because they knew that the tribes had confidence in him, and would be more likely to be guided by his advice than by that of any other person. He would now call upon them to say whether by the steps he had taken to stave off the inter-tribal war, and to bring the quarrel to an amicable termination he had done anything to forfeit their confidence. When he arrived amongst them, in January, 1864, he found both parties in a state of angry irritation—hostile passions erected—the red flag flying, nay the very day for the commencement of the strife almost fixed, both parties proclaiming that rather than surrender their claims—rather than admit the slightest claim on the part of their opponents, they would fight and die on the land. He appealed to all present who were then at Rangitikei whether in the ranks of the Ngatiapas, Ngatiraukawas or Rangitanes, whether that was not the true state of affairs. What did he do? For many days he went backwards and forwards between the litigants, proposing various terms, urging them to come to some compromise. He had urged a conference of the principal chiefs of each tribe—he had pressed arbitration upon them—he had urged them to agree to a division of the land—but he had never uttered one word about selling the land to the Queen. Nay, when the Ngatiapas insisted as the only possible solution of the difficulty, upon his accepting the land, he refused to accept more than whatever interest they might be found to have; and, again, when the nine chiefs representing the Ngatiraukawas and the Rangitanes, at Wharangi, formally handed the block to him, he only accepted the land subject to the claims of the Ngatiapas, and to the consent of the people to the sale being obtained.

What he wished now clearly to ascertain was whether any one of the proposals he made in 1864 to the tribes can be carried out.

It was then proposed to settle the question by arbitration. Arbitration means that each tribe should appoint a certain number of arbitrators; that if the arbitrators cannot agree, they appoint a third party to decide between them. This was a custom constantly adopted by Pakehas, and the decision of the arbitrators or umpire is accepted as a final settlement of the matters referred to them. Now suppose that they had gone, or will to-day agree to go to arbitration, and that the award of the arbitrators had been or will be that the land in dispute belongs to the Ngatiraukawas and Rangitanes, would the Ngatiapas have acquiesced, or will they now acquiesce in that decision? or if the arbitrators decided that the Ngatiapas were the sole owners of the land, will the other tribes assent to give up their claims? (Universal dissent). Unless the three tribes are prepared to pledge themselves to abide by the award of the arbitrators, arbitration is useless, and can only embitter the dispute, and lead to a recourse to arms.

Another proposal was that the three tribes should divide the land—but they objected to this that they never could agree in what proportion the land should be divided—whether each tribe should take a third, or one tribe a half, and two tribes the other moiety; that even if this difficulty could be got over, who was to decide what portion of the land is to belong to this tribe, what portion to the other—who was to decide whether one tribe should not be confined to the sandhills, another tribe to the good land—whether one tribe should not have all the land for which, according to one proposal, he had been called upon to pay two shillings an acre, another tribe all the five shilling land, and the third all the land they were asking £1 an acre for. Can these difficulties, which were pointed out in January, 1864, be now overcome?—is a division of the land now practicable? (Kahore, kahore).

Another proposal had been made during the discussion by Parakaia and others, that they should take the lands into the Native Lands Court, and have the title of the three tribes claiming an interest in it investigated by that Court. But Parakaia had omitted to tell them many things connected with that Court. He had not told them that all the tribes must consent to take the land into the Court—that each tribe must employ surveyors to mark out the boundaries of the land it claimed: that the tribe must be prepared to accept the decision of the Court as final. Were they prepared to comply with any one of these conditions? Would they all consent to go into the Court? (No, no.) Would anyone of them dare to send surveyors on the land, every inch of which they had declared to be in dispute, to be “fighting-ground.” Would they agree to abide by the decision of the Court? (Enough, enough).

He had gone through the proposals for the purpose of ascertaining whether one of them was practicable. Let the tribes say with an united voice that they agree to any one of them—that they will go to arbitration—let them say that they will divide the land—let them say that they will submit their claims to the decision of Judge Parakaia, and he would declare his concurrence in it.

He now gathered that the six tribes assembled before him were all but unanimous in scouting