

Company came and surveyed wrongfully that land, and altered the boundary from the one laid down by the Court. The company shifted the boundaries of the land, and we wish the boundary to remain as the Court fixed it. Let the company's boundary be put back, and the boundary that was laid down by the Court be adhered to. I ask the Commissioners to look into this matter and investigate the wrong that has been done. I wish the Commissioners to object to the boundary-line taken by the company. This land was reserved for the Natives, and a European came and laid down a boundary-line taking in our reserve. There is another matter that I wish to speak about. After that land had been reserved some of the Natives sold their interests in it to the company, and the company sought to have the shares they thus purchased cut out. Those that were sold were not in the reserve portion, but nevertheless these interests were cut out of the reserve. We object to this. The land that was sold was land outside the reserve, but the interests of the persons who sold were taken out of the reserve.

Pepene Eketone : I wish to let the Commissioners know the opinions of the chiefs who were assembled here last night, and, after that is done, to obtain a hearing for the different individual matters.

Waraki Kapu : I belong to the Ngatituwharetoa, Ngatiraukawa, and Ngatimaniapoto, and I wish to arrange to meet the Commissioners at half-past 7 this evening.

Arekatere Rongowhitiao : I think that the chiefs should first speak upon the subjects laid down, and then after that to come here again at half-past 7 if there is sufficient time.

Mr. Rees : We wish to hear the opinions of the chiefs, formed after having consulted their people, about general matters—the laws, and so on. After we have heard them upon the general matters affecting the whole of the people we shall be glad to hear any individuals who have causes of their own to speak about.

Pepene Eketone : You heard last evening what the chiefs said in expressing their gratification at the Commissioners coming here, and the pleasure with which the chiefs listened to the statement of the various reasons for which the Commissioners come here. The chiefs then arranged that forenoon of this day should be given them so as to place in order the various matters they wished to bring before the Commissioners. I desire now to inform the Commissioners that the chiefs and the people have gone very earnestly into these matters. They had their meeting this morning, and they came to their conclusions, and resolved that I should express their views to the Commissioners. I shall not take up your time long in explaining our views with regard to the subjects mentioned last night. The first point is the inquiry by the Commissioners as to the opinions of the Natives with regard to the Native-land laws. We have considered that subject, and I shall now lay before the Commissioners our views. The Commissioners will understand that the views I am about to express are the views solely of the Natives themselves. The first law that we wish to object to is the Native Land Duties Act of 1881. The Commissioners are aware of the great hardship of our having to pay a 10-per-cent. duty, seeing that in cases of similar transactions between Europeans they have only to pay a duty of $\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. That is why that in our assembly of the chiefs we considered this 10 per cent. to be a very heavy duty indeed to pay. The opinion of all the chiefs is that that Act should be repealed, and that the stamp duty on land-transactions should be the same for the Maoris as it is for the Europeans. I might explain that the idea of the Government in having that heavy stamp duty charged is on account of the expenses incurred in connection with the Native Land Court. Let me show to the Commissioners how this injury afflicts the Natives. Now, in the case of some land there is a great deal of objection and opposition offered in going through the Native Land Court. Then, there are cases in which the land goes through the Court with much less difficulty. Yet in both classes of cases the duty payable is the same, and in that way one set of cases has to bear the costs entailed by another set. That is all I wish to explain about that. Another law that we object to is the Native Land Act of 1888, sections 12 and 21. The meaning of those sections is that they give the Court power to subdivide the land and allocate the subdivisions to twenty persons, the Court having power to make these subdivisions whether the Natives apply or not. We wish those sections to be repealed. I will point out the injury, from our point of view, that arises from those sections. The objections are, the great amount of money that is expended in surveys and in orders of the Court and in the hearings of the Court. There is not much accruing to the Natives after these charges have been satisfied. Difficulties to the Natives also result from the operation of the Frauds Prevention Act of 1881 and 1889. We think that in the Native Lands Frauds Prevention Act there should be a provision enabling the Natives to show clearly to the Frauds Commissioner—in fact, to prove to him—by certificates or grants they had other lands left. A great many deeds have been passed under which the Natives parted with all the lands they had. When these Natives stated that they had other land left they were believed. I think, therefore, that the provision I suggest should be inserted in the Native Lands Frauds Prevention Act. Another law that we object to is the 15th section of the Act of 1888. I spoke about this last evening; but in one year more the power of that law will cease. It is the latter part of that Act. Then, there is the Act of 1889, which relates to the North Island Trunk Railway. We have considered the laws that place restrictions on the land for railway and other purposes, but we will reserve what we have to say with regard to that until the Commissioners go to Otorohanga. The greater number of the people who are interested in these lands are there, and others of them are absent from here at the present time. We are gathering together the Acts that we think are injurious to the Natives. There is another law—I forget the title of it—which empowers the County Councils to levy taxes on Native lands in accordance with the provisions of the Rating Act. The objection to that law, the main law—the Native and Crown Lands Rating Act—is removed as the Act is repealed. Yet, although the main Act is repealed, the County Councils still have power to levy taxes; but the Natives do not know what these taxes are that are placed on their land, because the Government pays them. And perhaps, in the future, when there will be a large sum demanded