

that he was here, as almost every conceivable matter connected with the Natives in this district and with the Rohepotae Block was brought under his notice. But the one matter on which the Natives laid the most stress, and concerning which they appeared to be unanimous, was that Government should remove the restriction against private purchase of land within the Rohepotae or King-country Block. They see plainly that their land is enhanced in value by the thousands of pounds of public money that have been spent in making the railway through it, also in making the road to the Waitomo caves, and the few other roads that are in this locality; and from evidence that is not wanting they believe that Government is not likely to do anything more in the way of spending public money on their property, so they would now like to be free from the incubus of the Government restriction over their land, and be allowed to sell it in the best market whenever they are ready to do so, with all its improved value caused by Government expenditure. One of the speakers (Mr. John Ormsby) pointed out several defects in the present working of the Native Land Court, and made suggestions towards remedying the same, notes of which were taken by the Hon. Mr. Cadman, and which will, I have no doubt, be duly considered by him.

The usual requests for roads, bridges, punts, railway-sidings, &c., were made by the Natives to the Native Minister, and some of them were slightly taken aback when he informed them that in the case of European communities, when they wanted small matters of that sort which would benefit themselves only, they usually held meetings and collected money for the purpose that was required, and did the work themselves without going to the Government for help. The Natives were impressed, I think, with the common sense and reasonableness of that view of the question, and it had the effect at the same time of opening their eyes to the fact that, in the matter of dealing with Native requests, the saying that "the old order changeth" has applied with equal force to them as it has to others during the past few years.

During the Native Minister's visit Te Kooti (who lives near Otorohanga) had a long interview with him in connection with matters concerning himself and also the Urewera Tribe, over which he has great influence and of which he is at present the guide and counsellor.

Native-land Laws Commission.

The Native-land Laws Commissioners visited Otorohanga in April last for the purpose of getting the views of Ngatimaniapoto chiefs and others as to the direction in which the proposed new legislation for Native lands should tend. The chiefs and people refused, however, to give their views, or make any suggestion whatsoever to the Commissioners. They were at that time very much taken up with their endeavours to get Government to remove the restriction against private purchase over the Rohepotae Block, so, instead of making suggestions to the Commission as to the proposed new Native-land laws, they thought they would improve the occasion by endeavouring to make use of the Commission to get the Government to remove the restriction from Rohepotae Block. They, therefore, as much as told the Commissioners that they had better first get Government to remove the restriction, and then come to them to ascertain their views with regard to the new Native-land laws. It is to be regretted that they acted in this way, because they and the Urewera Tribe may be said to be the only tribes in New Zealand whose lands are at the present time in what may be called a virgin or intact state, *i.e.*, have not yet been affected by sales or leases; so that any new laws that may hereafter be made for the management of and disposal of Native lands will have a far more important bearing upon them and their lands than those of any other tribe in New Zealand.

Survey of Roads in the King-country.

Now that the Rohepotae or King-country Block is being subdivided by the Native Land Court, I would suggest that the present is a good time to have the main roads from Alexandra and Kihikihi laid off by survey to their junction at Otorohanga, and then continued on in the direction in which the traffic is likely to extend in the future—namely, to the head of the navigation of the Mokau River, at the settlement called Totoro, and also following the direction of the railway-line to connect with the roads that are now being made from the Poro-o-Tarao tunnel to Taumarunui (the head of navigation on the Whanganui River), and also the road to Taranaki *via* the Ohura Valley, as those are the only roads that are likely to be used for some time to come, that is, until settlement extends over this district. If these roads are defined, any Natives desirous of fencing in their land could see by the survey marks, or could find out by inquiry, where the road is, and could erect their fences accordingly. The formation of the roads could be made hereafter as desired. If these road-surveys are made now, I am of opinion that not only will a great deal of obstruction to roads by Maoris be averted, but the fact of their being defined now would enable the Native Land Court—if such roads were shown upon plans of land brought before it—to utilise them, in cases where suitable, as boundaries between tribes and hapus, thus further lessening the probability of Maori obstruction hereafter. In the cases of blocks that may hereafter be acquired by the Crown, the fact of some of the main roads being already defined would mean so much less road-surveying to be done when the blocks are subdivided, previous to their being disposed of.

Tawhiao's Annual Meeting.

Tawhiao's annual meeting, which was held last year at his new settlement at Pukekawa, was this year held at Whatiwhatihoe, or rather it was commenced at Whatiwhatihoe, and adjourned from there to Maungakawa, near to Cambridge. Nothing, however, of much political importance took place. There was, of course, the usual condemnation of Native Land Courts, surveys, and selling of land. One of the matters discussed was the proposed removal of the bones of Potatau (Tawhiao's father) and other important Waikato chiefs that had been buried in past years at Te Kuiti, Hikurangi, and Whatiwhatihoe, to Pukekawa. It was finally decided that this should be done, and two new canoes have been made in the bush, at Pirongia, for the special purpose of conveying them down the river.