

lands so that they might bring us some revenue, for now we saw Messrs. Carroll and Wi Pere asking for the fee-simple of our lands, deriving their title from the company through the said agreements, mortgage, and assignments.

7. We were absolutely ignorant of the mortgage dated the 3rd day of July, 1888, from the said company to the Bank of New Zealand. We did not consent to or in any way countenance the said mortgage. We did not ask or agree that Mr. W. L. Rees and Wi Pere should go to England in or about the year 1888 to raise money to enable our lands to be opened up and settled. We were not parties to any arrangement in the year 1892 between the Bank of New Zealand Estates Company and Messrs. Carroll and Wi Pere. We did not ask or agree that they should represent us in the arrangement then made, and we strongly condemn all these various transactions. And no document or writing whatever can be discovered embodying our consent to any of the said acts and dealings, done without the knowledge of us the lawful owners of the said lands.

8. In the month of April, 1897, we appeared by Counsel before the Validation Court at Gisborne as "objectors" to the applications of the said James Carroll and Wi Pere. In the month of July, in the case of Ngamoe Block (one of our said lands), the Court dismissed the application affecting the said Ngamoe Block, on the ground that it appeared to the Court that its powers did not extend to claims affecting lands the titles to which had not been ascertained at the date of the transaction sought to be validated. It is open to the applicants to contest the validity of the said decision before the Court of Appeal. Many of our lands, the subject of applications in the Validation Court, are affected by the decision in the said Ngamoe Block, being uninvestigated at the dates of the transactions sought to be validated.

9. Many of our said lands, the subject of proceedings in the Validation Court, are not affected by the said decision. In respect of these we say that we, our chiefs, or such of us as signed the deeds of trust above referred to, did not receive any money or any other consideration from the said company or its agents. We do not wish our said lands placed under the management or control of the said James Carroll and Wi Pere. We strongly object to their applications. We do not place confidence in them or in their ability to administer our lands for our benefit, and we fear that under them our lands would be heavily encumbered.

10. We heard of a Bill intituled "The East Coast Native Lands Board Bill" brought before your House in the session of 1896. We objected very strongly to the passing of the said Bill, and were glad to hear that it did not become law. We have heard of a petition by the Hon. James Carroll and Wi Pere to this House, praying that relief be granted to them as trustees, that the jurisdiction of the Validation Court be extended, and to enable them with greater ease to bring larger areas of Native land under their control.

11. We have no desire to obstruct the settlement policy of this colony, and we have no desire to stand in the way of the Crown acquiring such of our lands as we cannot improve or settle, but the terms of purchase or alienation should first be arranged between the lawful owners and the purchaser; for we fear lest old transactions, unlawful, invalid, and prohibited, be validated to our detriment, and the lands we now occupy pass into other hands and we be left landless like other Natives injured by the dealings of the said company, for we are a numerous people and have little land left for our support.

12. But we desire that the lands which we occupy, whereon our villages stand, which we are attempting to improve and stock, and which are our only means of support, should remain to us.

Your petitioners therefore humbly pray,—

(1.) That the jurisdiction of the Validation Court be not extended to claims affecting lands the titles whereof had not been ascertained at the dates of the transactions sought to be validated.

(2.) That moneys advanced by the company to Natives in respect of lands to which they had then no title, and were not afterwards included in the title, be not allowed to be made a charge against such lands.

(3.) That the lands whereon our settlements and cultivations stand, which we are improving and attempting to farm and stock, be rendered absolutely inalienable, and reserved for the use of us and our children.

(4.) That this House do not permit our said lands to be placed under the control and management of any person, body, commission, or trustees without our consent first had and obtained.

(5.) That this House consider the applications of the said James Carroll and Wi Pere to the Validation Court in respect of our lands and the cost and expense entailed upon us in defending our titles and the disturbance caused in our said titles and the occupation of our said lands.

Enough. We wish you health.

And we, your petitioners, will ever pray, &c.

From WIREMU POKIHA AND 653 OTHERS