

own it. Now, I may say this, that I have been continually in the habit of visiting and interviewing the Premier and the Native Minister prior to the passing of the Act of 1900, and I do not forget this statement that they made to me, and which they also made at two important public meetings of the Maori people, one of which was held at Papawai and one at Waipatu. They said this: "Let our child be given birth to; we can all see that its mother is with child; now wait until the child is given birth to. If we find after the birth of the child that one of its feet is deformed, or that its nose is twisted, or that one of its arms is crooked, or that it has any other blemish, let us attend to that blemish and remedy it so as to have a proper child without any blemish or disability, so that we can say, Here is a desirable individual for this earth." Now, I remember another thing that was said before the Chairman of the Committee, who is here to-day. There was a certain Maori chief in the year 1898, whose name was Tamahau Mahupuku. He said, "I should like to take these shoes and put my feet into them, but if I find when I put those shoes on that there is a nail in one of them running into my foot, I shall take those shoes to the bootmaker who made them, and get him to take that nail out of the way." So I say that we have not mended the blemishes of this child yet, and therefore I say that I am agreeable to the proposals contained in this petition as pointing out the directions in which the blemishes should be remedied. If to-day was the day when the Premier and the Native Minister would remedy the blemishes and imperfections of this child, then my heart would feel rejoiced. If not, then I must say that personally my desire would be to trample upon and break the law. I have only a little more to say, seeing that Pepene has explained all these matters at length to you. There are three clauses in the Ngatimaniapoto petition to which I wish particularly to refer. Now, Pepene referred to the Maori Lands Administration Council as a machine to deal with the land. Now, I will say that, as I look at it, this machine is to deal with the following matters: it is, firstly, to break up the land, and, secondly, to break up the timber; the same applies to the stones, to live-stock, and to flax. We have tried to work the machine and put it into operation, but it will not work. Now, what we want to do is to remedy the blemishes in the machine so that it will work. That is point No. 1. The Council should continue to exist to protect the foundation of the law in regard to these matters, to protect ignorant and foolish people, children, old men, and women. Secondly, to watch and insure the proper working of people of knowledge and people of capacity. I say that people like myself, for instance, are capable people. I claim that I am a man of knowledge and capacity if I am given the right to administer my own land. Now, I will point out to you where I am wrong in saying that. I am an owner in somewhere about a hundred blocks of land in this colony. I have so-many acres in this block, half a dozen acres in that block, 10 acres in another block, and 100 acres in another block, and that is where I am wrong in saying what I said just now. But let me say that if I had all the scattered interests that I own lumped together in one locality I might be the owner of, say, 10,000 acres altogether. If I had my 10,000 acres in one piece, then, I say, I should be perfectly competent to administer it myself. If I chose to hand over my land to some one else for a consideration that it paid me to accept, then I should be allowed the right to do that. I think I have now come to the proper time, perhaps, to deal with the question of the exchanging of interests in land that has been referred to. There are a number of people—members of my tribe—who, above all things, desire to be allowed to exchange their interests, and we want the Court to sit for a long period and attend to and carry out this business. I have heard a voice saying that it is probable that this desire will be given effect to, so as to expedite the exchanging of interests between one Maori and another. Of course, it will be a matter of extreme satisfaction to me if that is done. What I want in regard to my own personal interests in land is this: let the Council continue in existence to watch me and see whether I administer them rightly or wrongly, but do not let them seize the mana of my lands.

7. That is an admission that you are not capable of administering your own lands, and you want the Council to look after them?—I simply say, let the Council remain there and watch to see whether I am behaving properly. If I have to take the matter to a lawyer, I should have to pay him more than I should have to pay the Council when I came to draw up deeds between myself and the pakeha. I say that if every one, if all the people were equally capable, then I would ask that there be but one law and one system in regard to them all, so that I say we should have some one to watch and look after us, the Maori people, and our lands, and the Council is that body. I have heard, of course, that there are large sections of the pakeha community using every argument that they can with the Government that they should be allowed to acquire the freehold of the Crown lands that they now hold under various tenures from the Crown. Therefore, I say, why should not the Maori also have his freehold; if you see a capable Maori, give him his freehold; but if you see a foolish Maori, then hand him over to the Council to protect him. Now, in regard to the forests: the law as it now stands is absolutely shutting out what I may describe as a regular gold-mine to the Maoris in forbidding them to deal with their timber lands. If it were not for the provisions of the law as it now stands, Maori owners of timber would long ere this have been the possessors of sums of money as large as those possessed by the pakehas. I can say this by way of illustration, that supposing there were 50,000 acres of good bush—picked bush, we will say—the property of Maoris, the Native owners could obtain from £10 per acre upwards for the timber alone on that land. If they were allowed to lease that 50,000 acres—that is, the timber on the 50,000 acres—for fifty years, they would draw in that time £500,000 for their timber. Now, would not that afford a magnificent income to the Maori people if you pakehas had not shut us out by your laws. Now, I will give a little story by way of illustration: There was a certain European, and he had two adopted children; one of these adopted children was a European and the other was a Maori. I may say that this European I speak of was the Government. Now, the Maori child had a plaything in its hand which the pakeha child wanted to get hold of, and was always crying for. The parent wanted to stop the pakeha child from crying, so he wanted to take the ball or whatever the plaything was from the Maori child and give it to the pakeha, and I say that that illustration applies to myself. Here am I the possessor of all