

it, in small blocks. Where the land is fit for grazing purposes for sheep and cattle, it will be sold in small runs; where it is fit for growing purposes, in small farms; where a township is to be, it will be sold in sections fit for a township: and the proceeds will be handed over to the people who own the land. Now, with regard to roads and surveys, we propose that, when a block of land is to be disposed of, the Committee of the block shall arrange with the Board how much shall go to surveys and how much shall go to roads; and this money shall be appropriated out of the first proceeds. I may say a few words with regard to the difference between selling land and leasing land. I may tell you, first of all, what has been done on the West Coast. Certain reserves were set aside for Te Whiti and his people. Those reserves have been leased by the Government for a certain term—thirty years. At the present time the rents from those reserves amount to £7,000 a year, and the proceeds of those reserves are now enabling Titokowaru and his people to have their parties all over the country. The rents from those reserves, though only £7,000 a year at the present moment, will soon be £10,000 a year. I think, therefore, it is better for the interest of the people that they should lease their land rather than sell it. In the case of leasing their land it remains to them for ever, and they are enabled to live in ease and comfort. I have noticed with great regret that when land is sold the money is soon parted with, and the money and the land are gone too. How much is any one of you the better for any land you have sold at the present moment? But where you have leased your land your rents are coming in year by year, and remain with you for ever; but the Government will give to you the right to say whether you will sell or lease your lands, and assist you in carrying out whatever decision you may arrive at. Now, we have not exactly fixed upon this plan, but this at the present time is the intention of the Government regarding your lands. I should like, therefore, to have your mind upon this subject. We think that this is the best thing to do—what I have suggested; it enables the owners of the land to exercise the principal voice as to how their own land shall be disposed of, at the same time you get the assistance of the Government in enabling you to dispose of your land. The Government brings all the machinery of the law and their own power to assist you in carrying out your own decision. I think, if a Board were established, that the lines laid down for the District of Wanganui would be very convenient lines for a district in which one Board should exercise its functions. With regard to the election of Native members, it might be best perhaps if one of the members was elected by the General Committee—that is to say, the District Committee, and one by the people directly. Now, the powers of the Committee would be exercised in this way: if the two Native members said that a thing was not to be done or was to be done, it would not be done or done accordingly, but if one Native member agreed with the Commissioner then it should be done or not be done. In that way the majority would rule. You will see, then, that the power really rests with the Native people and their representatives. Now, I will say a few words with regard to the railways and roads through your lands. He must be a very ignorant person who would object to a railway or a road being taken through his land. All Europeans are anxious for railways and roads; that is the great trouble of the Government—Europeans clamouring for railways and roads where the Government have no money to make them. I think, therefore, the Natives should be very glad to welcome this railway through their land. Land which is worth now not more than five shillings an acre will be worth five pounds an acre when the railway runs through the land. I therefore appeal to all the owners of land and all the Native people to welcome and assist this railway in passing through their country. I have heard there are two or three obstructionists—wild men—who are opposed to the passing of the railway through this country. I hope you will all use your influence to teach those people that they are opposing the interests not only of themselves but of the whole of the people in this district. We look to you to assist us in overcoming any obstruction. And here I would return my sincere thanks on behalf of the Government to Major Kemp and to Paori for the valuable assistance which they rendered in getting the survey for the railway through the country. Of course, I know that the assistance will be given in the future as in the past. Respecting the land over which the railway passes I will say one word. The Government do not ask from you any land. If any of the owners of the land over which the railway passes are willing to give the land which is the site of the railway, two chains wide, the Government of course will receive that land and be thankful for the gift. The Government, of which I am a member, propose to treat the Native people just the same as they would Europeans. If they want land for the purpose of building the railway, and the people wish to be paid for it, the Government will pay for the land. The Government do not wish to take any land—not a single acre of land—without paying the fair value for that land. The only land they want is just sufficient for the railway to run upon—two chains, or three or four chains, or it sometimes may be a little more when it has to pass through cuttings, &c. I therefore wish you to understand that in the matter of this land the Government will act precisely with the Native owners as they would act with European owners. The land will be taken under the Act, and, when the title is ascertained, the value of the land will be found out by arbitration, and the money paid to the owners. I think I have now said all that is necessary with regard to the railways and the leasing of lands, but there are many other questions which I have not touched upon which you may desire to have some information about, and if you wish for further explanation I will give it. I have dealt sufficiently, I think, with the surveys, although Paori referred to an eighth subject. I have now to explain that my colleague, the Minister for Public Works, upon my recommendation, is desirous of affording the Native people an opportunity of taking small contracts on the railway; and it is proposed, therefore, that along the middle portion of the railway near Manganui-a-te-ao the survey be made, and small contracts given in such a way that the Native people may tender for them. The railway has been commenced at Te Awamutu and at Marton, and it is also the intention of the Government to commence at Manganui-a-te-ao. It is proposed to reach that point by means of canoes. If the steamer is built before, we should reach it by steamer. I have now explained to you what the Government intend doing with regard to the railway, and I feel sure you will all feel greatly satisfied that it is the intention of the Government to give you the opportunity of assisting to build this railway,