

doing so unless the Committee of the particular block is willing. The fullest power, therefore, will be given to the people themselves through their local Committees, and no reason will be allowed to prevent or precipitate the action of the Committees. With regard to the question of prospecting, Mr. Ormsby seemed to imply that the Government had given permission to prospectors. If any prospector has said so he has alleged what is not true. The Government has given no permission to any prospector since my interview with Wahanui. If any prospector says so in the future, let him produce the writing authorizing him. In proof of this, it is but a short time since a notice appeared in the *Gazette* stating that no permission be given to any prospector to prospect, unless he first had the consent of the Native owners and the Native Minister. The Native Minister has the power of delegating his authority to some other person. When I was on the Wanganui River I delegated my authority in that district to the Chairman of the Maori Committee, and I have no objection to delegate my authority likewise to the Chairman of this Committee, to give permission or not to prospect, but I decline myself to give any permission to any prospector to go upon land the owners of which are not known. Now, with regard to the number of Native members in the House, I listened with great attention to the statement of Mr. Ormsby on this point. I took up the same question last session and discussed it in the House, pointing out that the Native people had not their fair and just share of representation, but we differed with regard to the population—it was one in five thousand. Now it is one in about six thousand. Then, again, a difference of opinion exists with regard to the number of the Native people. You will find it in *Hansard* that I stated in the House, last session, that there were forty thousand Maoris in New Zealand, and I stated that on the basis of the last census returns. Mr. Bryce got up and said that there were not more than thirty thousand. This would reduce the number of members, according to the basis that he stated, to perhaps five or six. I do not agree with Mr. Ormsby that the Native people should lose their right of voting for European members. That is a privilege which they enjoy when they own land in their own right; and I hold that it is only right that they should enjoy the same privileges as Europeans. I may say, further, with regard to the number of members, that I advocated, last session, that the number should be increased, and I shall still advocate it. I shall propose that they shall have the same number of members in proportion to population as the Europeans. With regard to the licensing district, there has been some misunderstanding or mistake in the matter. As an earnest of our intention and our regard for the Native people, we acceded to that petition and acted upon it. We took in a tract of country which perfectly astonished every person that saw the Proclamation. The Government received a strong remonstrance against the Proclamation from persons living at Kawhia, but it is now said that we have excluded some portion of the district from the Proclamation. I was not aware that we had done so, and I cannot yet realize the fact; but I will look further into the matter, and, if we find that there is a portion where there is no European population that ought to have been taken in, I shall take immediate steps to have it remedied. Reference has been made to companies coming in and purchasing land. I think that no stronger proof could have been given of the intention of the Government to keep companies out. There is not a company in the colony at the present time that is not violently opposed to the Government on account of its action in regard to Native lands. With regard to the restrictions upon Native lands that are passed through the Court, there is scarcely a day on which Europeans have not come to me and asked that restrictions should be lifted in order that the lands might pass out of the hands of the Native owners, and I have not in a single case lifted the restriction, although in some cases, where the action was commenced by my predecessors, I have been compelled in good faith to carry it out. That ought to be an earnest of my intentions, and of my action with regard to the protection of Native land. With regard to the Government purchasing land from the Natives, I am not anxious that the Government should purchase land. The Government had advanced large sums of money on lands that are under Proclamation, and will be satisfied if they can get that money back. The Bill that we intend to introduce will prevent the necessity of the Government acquiring lands, the principal object of the Government being to get the land and country settled; and, if the Natives will do that themselves by leasing their lands, the Government will assist them and not otherwise interfere. I think I have now gone over seriatim most of the questions which have been raised by Mr. Ormsby. If I have left any point obscure, upon it being pointed out, I am ready to explain it. I have been as full in my explanations as possible, and have kept nothing back with regard to the intentions of the Government, and I hope I have made it clear to all your minds.

*John Ormsby*: I was very pleased to hear Mr. Ballance's replies to the matters that I mentioned. Mr. Ballance's reply with regard to the Native Land Court is correct—that is, he says if any person sends in an application to the Court it would not be well to refuse that application. I say that the Committee that was appointed would be the proper body to deal with the land. I will admit that the Committee itself is not properly constituted just now. I was very pleased indeed to hear what Mr. Ballance said about increasing the powers of the Committee; and if those extra powers are given to the Committee, then I would suggest that the present Committee be broken up and a new one elected, and then each one would strive to elect his representative. On the election of the new Committee it would most likely be found that each hapu and tribe had its representative. Mr. Ballance was right in his statement that some chiefs, owners of the land, had already sent applications in to the Native Land Court for hearing. The reason those applications were sent in at that time was that there was no other course open to them; but, after the Native Committees were elected, then it was considered that those applications should be recalled, and the matters left to the Native Committees to deal with. We should remember that this deciding about the titles for land is a matter that requires a great deal of attention from all of us. It should be borne in mind that the Native Land Court has been in existence for over twenty years or more, and no other system has been established. The reason I speak in favour of the Native Committees is that I refer to actions that took place before ever the Native Land Court was in existence. In those days land was sold, and there was an end of it; there was no trouble afterwards in connection with it. There might