

have been a solitary case of trouble; that was all. After that the Court was established, on the supposition that it would do away with all troubles and evils, but it was found that it was the introducer of all troubles and evils; and numerous are the blocks of land that have suffered through the action of the Native Land Court, and so have the people. I am not prepared to say that the fault lies with the Court itself, but it is with those who conduct the matters that concern the Court. I hold with Mr. Ballance with regard to that, and we can settle that amongst ourselves. Now, with regard to the second of my questions—that is, the road—Mr. Ballance says that he believes the feelings of the Maoris are the same as the Europeans with regard to that. The Maoris are perfectly willing that the road should be made. Mr. Ballance was perfectly right when he said the objection was to the rates, not to the roads. Mr. Ballance has said that his own opinion is that the Rating Act should not be enforced upon this land; not until such time as something has been done in the way of disposing of the land. Now, as far as I am personally concerned, I am fully with Mr. Ballance on that point; but I would like it to be put in this way: not that we should be told that the Act will be left in abeyance, but that it will not be put over such land. If it is possible for him to sign a document satisfying us all that the Act shall not be put in force over our lands, it will be well; but we do not want that: we just believe what he says, but we bear in mind the compact that was entered into between Mr. Bryce and ourselves regarding the railway-line. A new king has arisen in Egypt, who knows not Joseph. That was not Mr. Ballance's fault, because the compact was not laid before him, and he was not made acquainted with it. Now, with regard to the Committees, we are very strenuous in asking that more power should be given to the Committees in the next session of Parliament, that they should have more power to deal with the troubles that crop up amongst the Maoris themselves. There are two sources of trouble: one comes from the land, in connection with the boundaries and the ownership to land; another source is robbery and assault and other petty crimes. I am divided in opinion about this matter. I think, perhaps, it would be wrong for the Committee to have power to deal with cases that only represent in value one or two or three pounds. It might be well to leave the power of the Committee to the larger subjects, such as dealing with land. With regard to dealing with crimes, I would have nothing to do with that. Have a Court independent of the Committee for that. With regard to adjudicating the land in favour of hapus, Mr. Ballance looks at that in the same way that I do. It is right which he says that it was the custom to give the land to ten people, and those who were not registered owners suffered thereby; but the proper way would be as suggested, that the owners of a piece of land, having been found, should amongst themselves elect a Committee to manage the block. With regard to Boards, we have not settled amongst ourselves with regard to that; it might be well to have three to form a Board, or possibly five. If it would be satisfactory for you to have five, let five be the number. With regard to prospecting for gold, I am with Mr. Ballance in his suggestion that he would delegate his power in this respect to the Chairman of the Committee. That would mean that it would be for the Committee to decide as to whether they would allow prospecting to go on. But for the present it would be well for you not to do that until things are a little more settled, and then let that power be delegated to the Committees. With regard to increasing the number of Native members in the House, I am clear as to what Mr. Ballance said with reference to his having brought the matter before the House. I am not able to persist in my statement in consequence of what Mr. Bryce has said, that there are only thirty thousand Maoris in the colony. I think no one can say exactly how many there are; but we ought to look at it in this light: there is a large block of land, four million acres in extent, and there is no one to represent it. The way it is at present: a member is elected, we know nothing about him, we never saw him. If a member were elected for this district he would not be able to go to the Thames. This district extends as far as Taranaki. A member of Parliament only gets £200 a year; £50 of that is expended in keeping him in Wellington, and he has no means of travelling about the country. But that does not matter, as I have heard from Mr. Ballance that he is in favour of increasing the number of representatives. Mr. Ballance thinks it is advisable for the Natives to vote for European as well as Maori members, but I thought it was as well that Europeans would not be able to turn to Maoris and say, "You vote for your own Maori member." I accept the explanation that was given with regard to the licensing boundaries. Mr. Ballance has said that he will endeavour to find out how it occurred, and set it right. I am prepared now to prove to him that the boundary has been wrongly fixed. I think that the Government should appoint some person to look out that there is no sly grog-selling. If Mr. Ballance would like me to show him the part that has been left out I will show it to him. I will now conclude what I have to say, and ask you that those reasons you have brought forward may be written down and signed, so that we can keep it and show it to future Governments.

*Mr. Ballance:* As no one else wishes to speak I will now reply to what has been said by Mr. Ormsby. With regard to what has been said about the Land Court, I agree to a large extent that the Court has not worked very well in the past. I freely admit that blocks of land went through the Court and the Natives saw very little of the money, the proceeds, or the land either. It passed sometimes into the hands of the lawyers and sometimes into the mouths of land-sharks. But you are aware that an Act was brought in two or three years ago which prevented lawyers from sitting in the Court, and removed many of the evils; and I trust that the powers that we are going to give to the Committees will tend to remove most of the evils remaining. It is the desire of the Government to remove from the operation of the Court all objections which might be taken by the people themselves who own the land. We have thought that, when the land has passed through the Court, it should remain in the hands of the people, subject only to the cost of the surveys and the fees which are now paid. Mr. Ormsby has asked me to tell him at once that the Crown and Native Lands Rating Act should not be put over the lands—that is to say, for the railway, and for the roads which lead to the railway—made for the use of the railway. I think that is a very proper request, and if Mr. Ormsby will address to me a letter upon the point I will send to him an official reply, which will be recorded in the department, which will be kept on record for future reference, and will be binding on future Governments. With regard to what I have said to-day, it is being taken down