

here word by word in shorthand, and will be published. I will send the chiefs and people a copy of that speech—that is, a copy of the proceedings to-day. I agree also that criminal proceedings should be excluded from the operation of the Committees, but I do not think that civil proceedings should be so excluded. Of course, if it is the wish of the Native people that they should not deal with civil cases, it is not the wish of the Government to force them upon them; but I understand that, at any rate in many districts, this was a power which was highly valued by the Committees. In respect to the boundaries of the licensing district some mistake has evidently been made, as I said before, and it has probably occurred in this way: The boundaries of a certain district were set out in a petition sent down by the chiefs and people who signed the petition. The Survey Department may not have understood the boundaries there delineated, and have taken certain boundaries of their own, but that is a matter that can easily be remedied, and if the proper boundaries are pointed out the remedy will be applied. With regard to sly grog-selling, the Government, of course, are very anxious to put it down: it is a loss to the revenue, and the Government do not wish to see the revenue decreased in this way. The only thing the Government can do in the matter is to appoint active policemen, who will see that sly grog-selling is not carried on, and if the culprits are discovered you may depend upon it they will be severely punished. I think I have now noticed the matters introduced in Mr. Ormsby's reply. I am sure that there has been a large general agreement with my speech as a whole. I think we clearly understand each other, and that all points of difference will be satisfactorily settled. I have done the best I can to put the matters at issue clearly before you, and I thank you all for the attention you have paid.

*John Ormsby*: There are two things that I wish to explain: one is with regard to the Committee. I think there was a misunderstanding about the Committee not dealing with crimes or small matters. The Committee being composed of twelve, it is too much to expect that they shall travel all over the place to deal with cases of this sort, and perhaps it would be better that a Maori Magistrate should be appointed to settle such cases. People may, perhaps, ask, Which, out of all these ten things which have been brought before Mr. Ballance have been really agreed to by him and settled? One thing we are clear has been settled by him—that the Rating Act will not be enforced in this district, because he has promised to answer a letter which we will write to him stating that it will not be done. We, as Maoris, think all the subjects should be included in the letter, not only that one, but the whole of them. What power will the Board have that is proposed to manage the lands? Will they be allowed to sell to the highest bidder, or only to the Government? The Maoris are most anxious that they should not be shut out from the market, but that they should be allowed to ask the best price they can. You might finish this meeting now, but the Minister must not think that it is all settled, because when we get outside some one may think of something else.

*James Thomson* said that there were two classes of Maoris—the chiefs and the inferior people; and, possibly, when the Native Minister meets them, he would confine his attention to the chiefs and have nothing to say to the inferior people. He wished to advise the Minister not to confine himself to the chiefs, for the inferior people had land as well as the chiefs, and in future to be careful not to make laws for the benefit only of the chiefs and not the inferior people. He asked to be consulted in the matter if it was intended to make laws only for the chiefs. He then went on to say: This is with regard to an Act that was passed last session that affects the Maoris. That Act provides that you only shall meddle with our lands, and that nobody else shall. You are the present Minister who introduced and passed this Act through the House. The Act provides that, although I am the owner of land, I am not to sell it or lease it unless you tell me to. If you say that I can sell my own land I am to be allowed to sell, it and not otherwise; and when the money is paid I am to give it to you and you are to bank it for me; and, after you have banked this money in payment for my land, then you have got to take out your portion for looking after the land. Now, I think that if, before passing that Act through the House, you had consulted the Native people as to whether they were willing to have it, it would have been better. Perhaps you will explain why you do not allow anybody outside of the Government to interfere in the purchase and sale of land. Now, we inferior people consider that, although we are of inferior position, we are the proper people to deal with our own lands. It may be that one person has a large area, and I may only have one acre, still I am the proper person to manage my own acre. In accordance with this Bill I may only own one acre, and it may be worth £1; you will take 10s., and I will take 10s.; therefore I consider that this is a Bill that strikes the Maoris—does them harm. We object to the Native Land Court, as it devours the land; but here we find that you are devouring the land. That is all I have to say. Perhaps you will be good enough to explain the matter and set my mind at rest.

*Mr. Ballance*: I will first of all reply to Mr. Ormsby, and then I will deal with Mr. Thomson's remarks. There is much to be said for the contention that a Committee composed of so many as twelve members might not be a very convenient tribunal, and it might be well to appoint a Sub-Committee out of the general Committee, or to appoint the Chairman to exercise the power. I am not alluding now to criminal offences, but to civil cases. However, that is a matter for consideration: it is a matter that I have not yet much considered. I am glad the suggestion has been made, and I will consider it. With respect to the Board's power of leasing the land, it is the intention that the land shall be in every case submitted for public competition, so that the highest price will be obtained for the land, and there will be no favouritism. Mr. Ormsby has asked that an answer similar to the answer that I proposed to give him with regard to the Rating Act shall be given to the other subjects. Those answers are contained in my speeches, with the explanations which I have given, and the official report of my speeches will be the very best replies you can get. He will see that most of those questions are proposed legislation, and will be dealt with in the Bill which we propose to circulate before the session, so that there will be ample time to discuss them amongst yourselves. I have tried to make these questions as clear as I possibly can, and have made long explanations. I hope you will take them exactly as I have given them, and, if you think there is any point still obscure, I am quite prepared to explain it; but I think I have put it beyond the possibility of even