

in the discharge of their duties, and an honest desire to benefit their race. Now, in the case of civil debts, the Committee can only adjudicate where the two parties agree. I propose to give them the power to adjudicate on cases when one party summons another for debt, and somewhat to increase the jurisdiction—that is to say, the amount which can be sued for. Then, again, I have given instructions that, when an application is made to the Native Land Court for a survey of land, a copy of the application shall be sent to the Committee, in order that the Committee may know what is going on with respect to the lands of the people. Then, at the present time, when a member of a Committee falls out, either through death or through resignation, you have no power of filling up his place until the number falls below six, when the Committee lapses, and then you may elect another. But I propose to give you the power possessed by County Councils and by municipal Councils, to fill up vacancies whenever they occur. And now I shall refer to the Thermal Districts Act, to which you have called my attention. You ask that it may be permanently established by the Government. I take it, therefore, that the wish of the Native people—at any rate, of large section of them—is, that the Proclamation bringing the Act into force shall not be restricted or removed. I take it from your address—I suppose I have placed the correct interpretation upon it—that your desire is that the whole of the land proclaimed under the Thermal Districts Act shall remain under the Proclamation. I will tell you what took place respecting this matter during the session: I had the pleasure of several conversations on this point with Mr. Tapsell; in fact, he brought down a private Bill to enable the Proclamation to be permanently retained over the lands. I told him that the Government were not in favour of private-Bill legislation—that is, affecting Native lands—and I gave him an assurance, with which he was satisfied, that, if it were the wish of the Native people, the Proclamation should be retained over their lands. I have not departed from that promise, but am prepared here, in the presence of the people, to ratify it in the same terms in which it was first made. I, in fact, am now convinced, from the address which you have presented to-day, that it is not your wish that these lands should pass from under the Proclamation; and I think that the wish of the Native people in this respect should govern the action of the Government. I have now gone over the various subjects which you have raised in your address to-day; and, while again thanking you, I would suggest that we might perhaps adjourn for an hour and return again, when we can go into matters of detail and general business. I would just like to make one request, and it is this: the pressure of public business, and the fact that I have appointed several other meetings with the Natives in various other parts of the colony has made my time exceedingly limited here, and—consistently, of course, with the proper discharge of business—I trust that our speeches will be made as brief as possible. Again I thank you for your very kind welcome.

*Whititara te Waiatua*: The Chairman of the Committee of Rotorua is absent. I would now like to read an address from the Committee of Rotorua:—

“This is a welcome from the Native Committee of Rotorua to you, the Native Minister. Friend, salutations to you. This is a welcome from the Chairman and from us, the members of the Native Committee of Rotorua, to you. We are extremely glad that you have come here to see us, so that you can listen to the speeches which we have to make, and the subjects we have to bring before you. Although you have not come to see us before, your good fame has reached us; and we are much gratified with the policy of your Government. We have heard that the policy of your Government has been indorsed and approved by a great many of the Native people of this Island; particularly with regard to the giving an opportunity of self-government to the Natives. Although only a small amount of self-government has been given to us—to the Natives—we were very glad to get it. No doubt the Government are right in thinking that a child should walk before it starts to run; but in our opinion we are capable of conducting matters of great importance connected with the tribes—that is, with regard to the administration of the land, and various matters connected with the tribes. Now, as you have come to see us we will take the opportunity of coming to you and presenting certain subjects for your consideration. May God guard you!”

*Mr. Ballance*: I have now to thank the Native Committee for the address which has just been presented. The opinions expressed in that address are very gratifying. I quite concur in the opinion that the Native people are quite capable of conducting their own affairs under the laws of the colony. We are extending gradually to the Native people the powers which have long been given to Europeans. Municipal or local government has been for ages one of the great glories of Great Britain; and it is believed by all authorities that those institutions have conferred more peace and more happiness upon the people of Great Britain than all other causes combined. Causes which have produced such beneficial effects amongst Europeans are, I believe, calculated to produce the same effects amongst the Maoris. These opinions of mine are not the growth of to-day or yesterday: I have thought and meditated over them for more than twenty years, and I am convinced of their salutary effect.

*Whititara te Waiatua*: As you have proposed that there should be an adjournment, I have to explain that when the meeting resumes it will not be a meeting of the whole tribe. You have probably received a document suggesting that the various sub-tribes should come before you separately to bring their matters under your consideration.

*Mr. Ballance* said that that arrangement would do very well.

*Retireti Tapihana*: We wish to reply to what you said to-day. We will withhold some of our replies to a portion of your statements for another occasion. I will only speak with regard to the subjects mentioned in the address presented to you to-day. The first is to give the Maoris extended powers for governing themselves. You, in speaking on this subject, referred more particularly to the District Native Committees and to the Committees for managing blocks of land. The members of the District Committee have been elected according to law by the people, and their powers are what you have stated to-day; but they are quite aware that they have not sufficiently large powers to deal with all the subjects they wish. With regard to your statement that the owners of land would be authorized to elect Committees to administer the different blocks of