

afford to pay. Where the duty is paid year by year he thinks less of it, as he has not to pay the money down at once; and, indeed, is not required to pay the money until he has produced something from the land. The fifth subject refers to the buying of Native shares, which it is thought should cease. Under the proposals which I have made with regard to future legislation that custom will cease. Then, with regard to the Frauds Commissioners, I have long been dissatisfied with the way in which the law has operated; but, if in future the land is to be disposed of by Boards and Committees, then there will be no further occasion for Frauds Commissioners. It has been said that a Royal Commission should be appointed for the purpose of considering the grievances on the East Coast. I admit that the state of titles on this coast is now very bad, and some remedy must be provided. I have not yet arrived at a conclusion as to what that remedy should be, but before next session I shall have given it full consideration and be prepared to suggest a remedy to Parliament. The seventh subject refers to the trustees in the case of minors. We have found by experience that, in many cases, these trustees have very grossly abused their position. I do not know that the remedy proposed—to refer the matter to the Native Committees—is the right one. I think it probable that the true remedy is to place these trusts under the Public Trustee, and let him appoint some responsible person in the district for the purpose of managing the trust. He, then, would be responsible to Parliament for the way in which he managed the trusts and distributed the money, and it would be impossible for the money to be misappropriated or misspent. But at any rate some kind of remedy is necessary; the present system is exceedingly objectionable. The next subject refers to the amendment of the law affecting the Native Land Court. I think that, in many respects, the Court does require some kind of revision. I am inclined to think that, for instance, where the Chief Judge sits in a case, he should not be the person to take the rehearing. Regarding the subject touched upon in connection with the Land Court—the Waiomatatini Court—now sitting, I would like to say a few words. You have asked that the Court should be adjourned. During the session, and since then, I have received numerous applications from Natives that the Court should sit. In fact, I was pressed in all directions for the Court to sit at Waiomatatini. In accordance with those requests, the Court now sits. And you now ask that the Court should be adjourned *sine die*. Is this the wish of the majority of the people? I am not in a position to say, but I have heard that some of the most important chiefs living there, of the Ngatiporou tribe and others, are in favour of the Court going on. In this case you see the people are divided, and what am I to do? Of course, I respect the opinions of the chiefs who have to-day asked me for an adjournment of the Court, and would like to comply with the request, but I have no power to adjourn the Court. That power rests with the people who have cases before the Court, and with the Chief Judge. I can only represent to the Chief Judge the wishes of the chiefs who have spoken to-day, and then leave the matter in his discretion, and that I shall do; but I can go no further. The last subject was the question of roads through Native land, and you think that this subject ought to be referred to the Native owner as to the best lines to be taken. It is thought that the engineer is the best one to lay off the roads, because he has most knowledge in these matters; but I think that, when you have your local Committees or your District Committee, it would be a very proper thing for the engineer to confer with those Committees in the case of taking roads through Native lands—that they should consult together as to the best lines to be taken; and, in the case of Government roads, I shall see that that be done. In the case of County Council roads, you must see after that yourselves, by bringing the proper pressure to bear on your representatives in the Council. I have now gone over the eleven subjects to which you have referred, and dealt with each. Tamanui Tera has said that I should go to Waiomatatini for the purpose of seeing the people there with regard to the Court. I had intended to visit that place on the present occasion, but the necessity of being here prevented me. I regret very much that I am not able to visit the people of that place on my present trip. I am required to be in Wellington by Saturday, and must postpone my visit; but I hope to have the pleasure of seeing the people there before Parliament meets. Wi Pere has referred to the Whangara Block, and has asked me to bring pressure to bear to prevent people from buying shares. He says that the land is under restrictions. I am afraid that I cannot prevent the European from buying shares, any more than I can prevent the Natives from selling shares, except in one way. I do not agree that any land should be dealt with on which there are restrictions; and since I have been Native Minister I have not allowed the restrictions to be lifted in a single case. The action of these people in buying shares is quite illegal. They can get no title, and they are only throwing their money away. Again, I think it is wrong on the part of the interpreters to be acting in cases which are undoubtedly illegal. Where restrictions have been placed upon lands, those lands are in the nature of public trusts, and restrictions are placed on land so that the land shall not pass away from the Native people; and I say that any person who tries to get behind the law in that way is doing an illegal act. The only way that I can prevent Europeans from dealing in these lands is by adhering to my resolution that the restrictions shall in no case be lifted. It is quite true, as Wi Pere said, that I advised him to sell no more land until the law was clear. I should consider it disastrous to the Native people if they parted with the whole of their lands, or did not keep sufficient to preserve them in a state of independence in the future. I have heard a person, who was once a Judge of the Native Land Court, say that the sooner the Natives had parted with the whole of their lands the better for themselves, for then they would have to work for their living the same as labourers, and they would be forced to adopt habits of industry. I saw a letter also published in the newspapers from another person who had been a Judge of the Native Land Court, and in this letter he taught the same doctrine: he thought that the sooner the land was got from the Natives the better, even if it passed into the hands of the speculator. Now, I have no hesitation in denouncing this doctrine as grossly dishonest and cruel. I dispute the conclusions. I say that the only way the Natives can be preserved or attain a high state of civilization is by preserving their lands. That is the conclusion at which I have arrived after a great deal of thought; and I am bound to tell you, therefore, that the whole object of the