

Hokamo then said that he would only bring forward two claims. They were lands in which the Government was interested, and there was a balance of money due. The bulk of the people agreed that those two blocks should be heard. The Ngatiporou generally approved of the resolution to withdraw the whole of the lands from the Court. When the Court opened the whole of the people went into the courthouse. I stood up before the Court and said: "I am one of the persons who has an application before the Court." I said that all the lands between Tawhiti Maunga and Uawa would be withdrawn. The Court asked me my reasons, and I explained that we had no money to pay the Court fees; and, secondly, that we wished to have time to see if some better law could not be devised. The Court then asked how long an adjournment we required; would we be satisfied with three months, or more? I then said that we would ask for an adjournment for three months, and if that was found to be too short we would get a further adjournment. The Court agreed to my request. Hone Paerata then said that he would withdraw Waipiro from hearing. Waipiro is the largest block belonging to Ngatiporou now before that Court. It amounts to thirty thousand acres, and has not passed the Court. When Hone Paerata asked for this land to be adjourned, another man said, "This is the land which I particularly wish should be heard." There was a dispute, but it resulted in Hone Paerata's request being agreed to; this block was adjourned for three months, on the understanding that, if three months was too short, there would be a further adjournment. After we had finished speaking before the Court, the whole of Ngatiporou rose up and withdrew all their claims; subsequently all the applications for succession were withdrawn. Then a European called William Milner stood up and said that the succession claims were to go on. He claimed on behalf of his children, his wife being dead. Eight claims were heard, and he paid £14 14s. fees. This European then went outside and said to the people, "Look at me, I have been called upon to pay these heavy fees." The Natives were then more strenuous in having the succession claims adjourned, when they saw how much this European had to pay. Sir George Whitmore then spoke to the Judge and said that it was his wish that the fees should be lessened. The presiding Judge said that he had not the power to make any reduction, but that he would refer the matter to the Chief Judge. Sir George Whitmore went to Auckland and saw the Chief Judge on the subject, who agreed to reduce the charges to 5s. for each application. When they became aware that the whole of the claims had not been adjourned they turned their thoughts towards this meeting. Ngatiporou then said, "It is the wish of the people of influence and importance to come down to this meeting;" but one man—he was only one of a number of applicants—got up and said, "I do not intend to go down to this meeting." Ngatiporou then became undecided, because they thought that, if some of them came here, some of the people would proceed with the business during their absence; and the Court encouraged these Natives to bring their cases forward. If you are able to adjourn the Court but for a week, so as to give Ngatiporou an opportunity of signing a petition, you would find that it was the united wish of the whole tribe that the Court should be postponed. Tamanui Tera is the man of highest rank amongst Ngatiporou; he is the head of their tribe, and whenever he speaks he speaks the wish of the whole tribe. There were two great chiefs of Ngatiporou—Te Hokamo, who is dead, and Tamanui Tera, who is the great surviving chief. I see that some of our European friends have been putting the matter before you in a different light. Of course we only hear what you say to us from your interpreter; we do not know what they say to you. I ask you to support me in this: that the lands which I withdrew from this Court should be held back till some better law has been devised for dealing with Native lands. I shall represent this matter again to the Judge.

*Hone Paerata*: I shall speak to you about Waipiro. I adjourned that claim for three months. I ask that you will assist me in having that land adjourned from the present Court. I will bring it before the Court on some subsequent occasion. There are two chiefs interested in that land, myself and another. I ask that it may be adjourned, so that the District and Local Committees may deal with it hereafter.

*Wi Pere*: I have heard all the matters relating to the Court now proceeding at Waiomatatini. I know the evils that will come upon the land in consequence. I say that, directly those lands pass the Court, they will pass from the hands of the Natives. There are many reasons why I say this. First, the troubles that affect the Court itself: the custom of the Court in fixing the witnesses who are to give evidence, and the men who are to conduct the various cases; so that, when one person has been appointed an agent to conduct a certain case, if he should prove to be incapable, he cannot be replaced by a person possessing greater knowledge. Native Committees would not act this way. They would first of all carefully consider who are the most suitable persons to act as agents. The fault of this rests with the Native Land Court. Another fault is, the Natives going to Europeans and borrowing money to pay the Court fees. The former Government passed a law which provides that it is illegal to advance moneys on lands which have not passed the Court; but who will inform the Government when breaches of that law are committed? Another fault of the Court is this: In some cases the real owners of the land are set on one side on account of their not being able to conduct their cases, and the land is awarded to persons not possessing such large claims, or having no claims at all, but who are more able to conduct their cases; and afterwards, when subdivisions are called for, the real owners will ask for their shares to be given them, but the other people will argue that the Court will refer to its former notes and judge accordingly. Another fault committed by the Court is this: paying attention to the applications made by persons who are not the owners of the land, and giving way to them and doing as they wish. A great many blocks of land have been dealt with in this way. I therefore urge that you will ask the Chief Judge to adjourn this Court, as he has the power given him by Parliament to do so. In the whole of this district, extending from Wairoa to Waiapu, the only lands that remain to the Natives are those immediately about Waiapu; and I think that when a better law is passed there will be no lands to which to apply it, as all the lands will have passed away from the Natives. I went to Opotiki to persuade the Natives to withdraw their land from the Court. I am informed that two-