

THURSDAY, 20TH AUGUST, 1885.

WAHANUI'S (Chief of Ngatimaniapoto) examination continued.

136. *Mr. Ormond.*] Would you answer the question put to you yesterday to be considered—that is, whether you think this Bill calculated to bring about a settlement of the waste lands which the Natives do not want to occupy themselves along the railway?—If the Native owners are first assured that they shall have authority—full authority—over their land, then, perhaps, it may come to pass that the land will be occupied and settled.

137. I asked you yesterday whether you thought any arrangement, practically for the same object, would be likely to be effective between the Government and the tribes. Can you give me any further answer about that?—My reply to that question is that, if the Government give to the Natives the sole authority of administering their lands, then, perhaps, some satisfactory arrangement can be made.

138. Now, I want to ask you some questions on this Bill, with the view of seeing how this object—I mean an arrangement for settlement of the land—can be effected under it?—Do you mean to ask me whether this land can be disposed of, whether it can be sold or disposed of without giving the Natives full authority?

139. The answer you give will show whether you consider that this Bill will give such authority?—I can give no other answer than the answer I gave just now.

140. Let us now go to the Bill. Yesterday I asked you, and I ask you again to-day, whether you understand this matter of Native Committees, and, if so, whether you wish that the sole power of dealing with these Native lands should be in the hands and under the administration of Native Committees?—I wish the whole of the owners of the land to have the real authority over the land.

141. Did you not say yesterday, and do you still wish, that this should be done by Committees?—What I mean is that the real authority of deciding how the land should be administered rests with the owners generally; they can direct the Committees as to what they wish to be done.

142. Do you understand that, if this Bill comes to be law, before any Committee can come into existence, the land must be adjudicated on by the Native Land Court, and the owners determined by that tribunal?—I know that the Bill is in that direction. But I will not allow my land to be adjudicated on by the Native Land Court at present, for I know it is impossible to get a rehearing. Even when the judgment is wrong and the land has been given to wrong owners, it is impossible to get a rehearing; therefore I will not consent to my land being adjudicated on by that Court.

143. Do you not see that under this Bill that will be a fatal objection to its becoming useful?—In answer to that, I have to say that we have submitted amendments which we wish to be made in the Bill.

144. Have you submitted any proposal to do away with the Native Land Court?—Our wishes are embodied in the amendments that are sent in.

*Mr. Locke:* Have we seen these amendments?—

145. *The Chairman.*] Would Wahanui say whether these are among Wi Pere's amendments?—Some of them are contained in the amendments submitted by Wi Pere, some are in another document.

146. *Mr. Locke.*] In the possession of Mr. Ballance?—

*Hon. Mr. Bryce:* Will you try and make him understand that this Bill will not apply at all until the land has passed through the Native Land Court.

*Mr. Ormond:* I have tried to do that.

147. *Hon. Mr. Bryce.*] He still thinks that some of these clauses will apply. Ask him again whether he understands that until the land is through the Court this Committee-system will not apply?—Yes; I understand that fully.

148. Then explain how your proposed amendments could be brought into use, and your Committee be got to work?—I have asked previously that the sole authority for the administration of our lands may be given to us.

*Hon. Mr. Bryce:* I suppose he means that if that is done, they can administer it.

149. *Mr. Ormond.*] But you are not prepared to submit the land to the Native Land Court?—Do you think that I would hand over my land to be destroyed, to be swallowed up? Owing to the improper manner in which the Native Land Court is carried on we will hold back our land: we will not give it up, for we have seen the evil result of handing it over to the Court. In consequence of the way the Native Land Court acts I will not hand over my land; I will positively refuse.

150. If that is your determination, do you not see that the Committee-system proposed by this Bill cannot possibly apply to your land?—Yes, I have heard that is the case.

151. But do you not see that it must be the case?—If the sole administration of our land is assured to us, then perhaps we will hand over a portion to be dealt with by the Court, to be used for settlement. If that power is not given to us generally as owners, we will not hand over the land at all.

151. *Hon. Mr. Bryce.*] This phrase "hand over the land," I presume, is equivalent to "investigation of the title" by the Court?—Aye.

153. *Mr. Ormond.*] I now want to ask you a few questions with regard to the working of the Committees themselves, supposing them to be brought into existence. First, are you aware that the Committees will be people appointed by the Native Land Court as owners of the land which will be handed over to the Committees to arrange about?—Yes.

154. That is, if there are fifty or any other number to whom has been awarded the ownership of the block, they can elect from among themselves any number, not exceeding seven, to administer the land: I am now asking whether you understand that that is what the Bill provides?—I do not accept that as a settled fact, because perhaps our proposed amendments have yet to be embodied in the Bill.