

with whom you are on very good terms, also see that you are passing away, and say, "Cannot this be stopped?" Then this causes the thinking men of the Native race, and also of the European race, to reflect, and we say, then, surely something can be done to prevent this. Now, the result of these reflections has been given effect to by the Parliament, because the Parliament speaks both for the Europeans and the Native race, and laws have been passed in the interest of the Native race, and which, if given effect to, and taken in the spirit intended, will go a long distance to prevent the races from disappearing from the face of the earth, and will certainly improve the condition of the Native race. You said here to-day that you were pleased to meet me and my colleague, because you said we had brought laws, and would explain these laws to you. You spoke truthfully, we do bring with us the law. My colleague very shortly touched upon the laws passed. I will go further into that law. In your interest we must commence with this assumption first that as the Natives stand to-day with large tracts of land which they cannot use themselves, and are not using, but which require to be used for their benefit as well as the Europeans, that condition of affairs cannot exist any longer. As pointed out by the Hon. Mr. Carroll, my colleague, the Europeans use the land, and cause it to produce so that they can live. The Natives are not utilising much of the land they own. The great trouble with them is that one does not like to improve the land because he is improving for another—some one else gets the benefit. This uncertain state of affairs keeps the country unimproved. Therefore, we must, in the interest of the Natives, ascertain who it is that owns the land, and I am sure in this very district the feeling exists amongst the different tribes and hapus that they are not able amongst themselves to decide who the land belongs to. One disagrees—one claims it, others dispute it, and I find within a certain radius here that this feeling exists, and it is not in your interest or the interest of the Europeans. Now, if the title to the land was ascertained, and every one knew who it belonged to, these disputes would be settled once and for all, and adjusted fairly, you would be all on the very best of terms, and there would be a kindly feeling existing amongst you. Now, some have petitioned to have the land put through the Court, and get it surveyed. Others object to its being surveyed, and even break the law, and will not permit the titles to be ascertained. The position is this. Speaking for the people here, one of the speakers said, "We desire that the Government should ascertain the titles and put the land through the Court." Well, that is his wish, he speaks, of course, for those interested. Where I go to-morrow they may oppose this being done. They may say to me, as head of the Government, "We do not wish this to be done." Now, I always have this feeling that those who do not want the land to go through the Court appear as if they were afraid, and this weakens their case, but I will not come to a conclusion until I have heard the other side. I will hear them and see if they have any objection. I will treat the Natives as I would treat the Europeans. I will hear all they have to say, and then decide. But I will tell you this: the Parliament has given me power to say that, whether the owners want it or not, whether they object or not, the power rests with the Government of saying that the titles to the land must be ascertained. So that, even though all opposed it, the power is with the Government to say the titles to the land shall be ascertained. I wish you to distinctly understand this, for it is to your interests. And this great power that is given to me and given to the Government, we intend to use but at the same time we intend to use it mercifully, the same as a father would use it in the interest of his children whom he loves so dearly. Now, when we have done this, the owners of the land will be in a position to do two things. First, they will be able to know where their own particular land lies, and if they want to go upon it and cultivate it they can do so, fence it in, and live upon it. You will then be in the same position as the pakehas. If there is more land awarded to you than you can utilise, or than you want for your families, then the law provides that you can either sell it or lease it under the same laws the Government lease Crown lands to the Europeans, and, so that you shall not be unfairly dealt with, there is a Board appointed to value the land and fix a fair value for the Natives, and on that Board there is a Native Commissioner and the member for the Native race for the district. The others are Government officials, who have no interest except in seeing there is a fair value given to the Natives for the land. If they are satisfied with the decision of the Board as to the value of the land, and two-thirds of the owners of the land object, then the land is put up to public auction and disposed of, so that you will therefore see that, whilst we have taken those great powers I have alluded to as regards ascertaining the titles, still the principle is laid down that you must only dispose of the surplus lands, and at such a price as is fair to you. I desire, in conclusion, while speaking on this subject, to impress upon you this fact that the Government is standing between you and six hundred thousand Europeans. The pressure is becoming greater and greater every year. The Europeans are very much irritated because there is no land upon which they can go. The Natives, they say, are not cultivating the land, and there it remains in a state of nature. Every week that this position is maintained is against the Natives. The laws now passed are very fair, and if advantage is not taken of them—if the Natives do not accept what we have been able to get for them now, I fear they will have cause to regret it. As one taking a father's interest in you, I am here to-day asking you to assist me in solving this difficult problem. Now, I desire also to tell you that, in ascertaining the titles, the Government are determined to avoid the great expense you were formerly put to, and I believe it has been the great expense of the past that has prevented the Natives from getting the land put through the Court. One way of lessening the expense of putting the land through the Court is for the Government to put their officers where the large majority of the Natives are located. All the Government has to do is to take two or three officers and locate them where the majority of the Natives are. There are scores of your wives and children who have to go where the Court is; they are put to great expense for food, and evils overtake them, which, I think, would be avoided if we establish the Courts where the majority of the Natives are located. Now, you may ask me what proof the Government has given that they are your friends. My answer is, We are, because to-day you have informed me that you are very pleased we have passed the Equitable Owners Act. The injustice of the Act of 1876 was remedied by the Act passed last session. This Act gives you fair-play.