

demeanour in which you have introduced your subjects. Your manner has been respectful and sincere. In the first place, I am pleased you agree with me that the best thing to do would be to leave the larger questions to be dealt with at Waima. I will first deal with the personal grievances—those in regard to the land. You speak of the improper action of others and of the action taken by the Government. Now, this is the first time I have heard anything in reference to these lands. In dealing with land the Government must be very careful lest injury be done to others. I will cause inquiry to be made how the Government became possessed of the land to which you refer. It was not explained to me, or any reason given, why the Government have taken it. As a rule, the Government is very careful, and it does not without just cause take the land of the Natives. If a mistake has arisen the Government is only too glad to set it right. If the land was confiscated and taken as a matter of right by the Government, then the Government remains in possession. It is somewhat difficult, from the meagre explanation, to know the exact position of the case. It would be better for you to reduce the whole question to writing. Now, touching the dispute of Taurau, evidently the dispute is of many years' standing, and ought to have been dealt with by the Court. Now, there are many cases where the same parties own an interest in land, and when the land is going through the Court some of them hold aloof. Then when the land has gone to others they complain, because, they say, they have been unjustly dealt with. When land is going through the Court they ought to see to their own interest. If not, the blame rests with themselves. It has been stated that one-half of this particular land has been sold. Taurau got one-half of the money and the other half rests with the Government. I do not think it is at all possible now to go back upon the original transaction. It is only a question of whether the right person got the money—whether Taurau is entitled to £400 or £200, or how much he is entitled to. You say he did not get the whole of the money—that some of it is still in the hands of the Government. That we can find out hereafter. If you went to law, and the whole thing was to go through the Court again, perhaps the £400 would disappear. You would then be in a worse position than you are in now, because the land would be gone and the money too. I will at once make inquiries into the matter and see whether there are any good grounds for the complaint or otherwise. Now I come to the other question, and that is the question of the County Council and the dog-tax. In some places where I come from both the Europeans and Natives have to pay 10s. for every dog. Am I right when you tell me the dog-tax here is 5s.?—(Yes.)—Now I can tell you how you can reduce the tax. It is in your own hands. If you only keep half the dogs that you have you would only have to pay one-half of what you do at present in the way of taxes. I would rather see more pickaninnies about the Maori pas than dogs. There is no tax to pay the County Council for pickaninnies. The taxing of dogs is a matter which rests with the County Council and not with the General Government. If I found the county was charging you more than they charge the European, I would at once step in and say it was unfair, and I would not permit it but if they only charge you the same as they are charging the European, then the law and the Government cannot interfere. The only question now is for you to ask yourselves whether these dogs are useful and are required by you, or are simply kept as luxuries. In former days your forefathers required some dogs, because a dog was an essential necessity for procuring food, but when they are kept for pleasure and not for use, then it is a question how many you can afford to keep and pay for. As I told you at the start, in other places they are charged 10s. and in this district you are only charged 5s., consequently you only pay one-half of what is paid in other parts of the colony. That brings me now to the question as to the convenience of taking out the collars—whether the county consults your convenience as to where you can get these collars. Your representations on that head will be referred to the County Council. Another question raised was as you contribute largely to the government of the county you think you should have some representation in the County Council. There is nothing to prevent a ratepayer, whether Native or European, from becoming a member of the County Council if he can get enough people to vote for him. I would very much like, myself, to see the Natives represented in the County Council, they might comprehend the position of things better than they do now. But it is not the fault of the law that they are not there—it is because they do not try to get into the County Council. I feel sure that if they were to get into the County Council it would do good, and I know that amongst them they have men well capable of holding a seat in the County Council, and assisting in the local government of the country. Now, you have representatives in Parliament, and the matters you have brought under my notice are matters which are fair questions to be brought before Parliament. You may rest assured any representations made to Parliament on your behalf will be fairly considered by the representatives of both races. In the meantime there is only one law. Your forefathers, by the Treaty of Waitangi, agreed to cede the rights of government to the Crown. That sovereignty reigns supreme, and it is your protection just as much as it is the protection of the Europeans. If it were not for that protection, yourselves, your property, and your lives would not be safe. It is the only protection you have and your forefathers saw it was in your interest that that should be done, or otherwise you would be the same as the aboriginal natives in other countries—you would disappear from the face of the earth. You should always obey the law and assist in maintaining the law, because by doing that you are assisting in maintaining yourselves and your interests. So long as you do that you will always have the good wishes of myself and those who govern the country; and I beg to assure you that if I found any one trying to impose upon you, treating you unjustly in violation of the law I would protect you the same as the Europeans are protected, and in doing so I am only carrying out the solemn terms of the Treaty of Waitangi. You are here to-day as free men laying your grievances before me just as the Europeans do. Now, my advice to you is always to obey the law, and, if you have any grievances, submit them to the Government. If any injustice is done to you, just write to the Government, and I pledge you that you will receive just treatment. With regard to the Native Land Acquisition Act, I will discuss that with you at Waima. I wish