

bridges, railways, and other improvements which in other parts of the colony have been made at the expense of the consolidated revenue, to which the Native owners have contributed." Subsection (6) of clause 18 of the Bill provides that the Board shall have power to expend money in certain directions. What subsection (e) of the petition means is that we petitioners are afraid—we dread these powers which are vested in the Board by the Bill. I have explained why we are afraid in subsection (a) in clause 3 of the petition. There is section 26 of the Bill. I would like to ask the Committee to explain to me what these things mean. It reads thus: "All rentals, royalties, fees, and other income derived in respect of lands vested in the Native Land Board under the provisions of this Act shall be paid to the Board, and shall, in the prescribed manner, be applied by the Board. We do not know what royalties and fees are. What do they mean? What are they? This is what we are very much afraid of. We are in dread of this section and the power it gives to the Board—right through this section 26 and its three subsections. Section 34, subsection (1), provides that interest upon the amount of the advance shall be at the rate of £5 per centum per annum. Now, that is one of the reasons why we say we dread the power that is being conferred on the Board by this Bill. We object to the interest that accrues from money derived from Maori lands being set aside to pay money borrowed in this way. That is one of the things that firmly convinces us that, once land is given to the Board under this Bill, it is the last we shall see of it, and we shall never get it back again. Now I go to section 42, "Moneys deemed to be public moneys." That section provides that all such moneys payable to such account shall be deemed to be public moneys—that is, belonging to the colony at large—or, as I understand it, the money becomes the property of all the pakehas, all the negroes, all the Chinamen, and all the Europeans of whatever nationality. These negroes, these Chinamen, or these people of other nations never had an interest in these lands from which these moneys are derived; yet, without any warrant for so doing, we are going to make them participate in these moneys derived from our land. There are other sections also in the Bill to which I will refer. Now, in the Lands Improvement and Native Lands Acquisition Act of 1894 there are certain sections that provide means whereby moneys may be borrowed. Section 8 of that Act provides that "Out of the moneys hereinafter authorised to be raised two hundred and fifty thousand pounds shall, as and when raised, be paid into the Public Account, and be credited by the Treasurer to a separate account called, 'The Lands Improvement Account.'" Very well; section 47 of the Board Bill says that "This Act shall be construed subject to the provisions of the following Acts, that is to say: 'The Railways Construction and Land Act, 1881'; 'The Land and Income Assessment Act, 1891'; 'The Public Works Act, 1894'; 'The Rating Act, 1894'; 'The Rating on Unimproved Value Act, 1896.'" This section is to be construed without any reservation. It does not say under the provisions of any particular part or section, but without reserve under the whole of these Acts. Now, as we understand it, this Board can borrow up to £250,000. I propose, for the sake of argument, to illustrate that in this way: Where construed under the provisions of this Act it is competent for the Board to borrow £200,000 this year, another £200,000 next year, and before we get four or five years hence we shall find it utterly impossible for these lands to relieve themselves from the moneys borrowed on them. There is nothing in the Bill to prevent the Board from borrowing how it likes. I would like to read sections 12, 16, and 18 of the Act of 1894, from which I quote. By section 12 it is provided, "Out of the moneys hereinafter authorised to be raised two hundred and fifty thousand pounds shall, as and when raised, be paid into the Public Account, and be credited by the Treasury to a separate account, called 'The Native Lands Purchase Account.'" Section 16 says, "For the purposes of this Act the Colonial Treasurer, upon being authorised by the Governor in Council so to do, may from time to time raise any sums, not exceeding in the whole five hundred thousand pounds, out of any balances in any of the accounts mentioned in Part VIII. of 'The Public Revenues Act, 1891,' or out of moneys at the credit of the Public Works Fund, or wholly or partly from any bank, monetary institution, or person." Section 18 provides that, "As security for any money raised as aforesaid, the Colonial Treasurer may from time to time create and issue debentures for any amount not exceeding five hundred thousand pounds." To go back again to subsection (e) of paragraph 3 of our petition, I have endeavoured to show the reason why we dread the exercise of the borrowing-powers conferred upon the Board by this Bill. Now, to proceed to paragraph (f) of section 3 of the petition—"That your petitioners object to the transference, as proposed by the Bill, to the Native Land Board, a body probably without judicial experience, and which may be controlled as aforesaid by political influence, of the powers of partition, succession, the definition of relative interests, and the appointment of trustees, as proposed by section 21 of the said Bill." Now I propose to explain to the Committee the objections that we take to the body whom it is to propose to constitute into a Board to deal with our lands. First, what we say is that these are not people who will know how to investigate the rights of ownership.

5. *Hon. Mr. Carroll.*] You prefer the Native Land Court as it is?—I will go on to speak of that presently. Another thing to which we object is the appointment of Native members to the Board, to be selected from among the people who own land in the district in which the Board is to act. That will show that the two Native members of that Board must be men who are interested in certain parts of the district wherein they will be called upon to act as judges. Now, what does that mean? These men cannot fail to have certain ideas and certain opinions as to what are their own rights and the rights of hapus and people within the boundaries of the land over which they are called upon to preside as members of a Board of management. Secondly, it is to be asked what will be their opinion about themselves as members of that Board? If they are, besides being members of the Board, owners in the land in which they themselves will be called upon to deal, I am afraid it is competent for us to say that these men will be biassed, that they will have leanings towards the side of their own relatives and hapus, and their own individual rights, or what they may conceive those rights to be. Now, secondly, it is provided that the decision of that Board, upon investigation, is to be final, and there is to be no means of securing redress if people are not satisfied with their findings.