

tect the Board, and the interests of the people and their lands through that Board—the Government to have authority to lay down certain lines of action with regard to the administration and working of the lands. I would not be willing that any Board should be constituted and given the sole and only power to manage and administer the lands, because it would be possible in that event for, say, the President or Chairman of the Board to decamp with the money, which might be a large sum, £4,000 or £5,000 perhaps—he might disappear altogether, and the Maoris owning the land would be unable to trace his whereabouts. That is why I desire to see the Government have full authority or control over the Board. My second reason for wishing so is with regard to cases where the Board might wish to borrow money, or the owners of land might wish to borrow with a view to farming and improving the land. If the European people knew that the Government was the head and controlling authority of the Board, then they would have no hesitation to advance loans on the land, knowing that they were advancing to a responsible body in so doing. Now, one of the principal reasons why I am so desirous that this Board should be constituted without delay is that there are so many ways and means whereby Maoris' lands are seized and taken away from them. They are seized for debt, again they are seized under mortgage, and again they are seized under survey claims; therefore I wish the welfare of the East Coast Maoris to be placed in the hands of the Government—let their interests be taken out of the hands of private Europeans. I will explain the position in which the East Coast Maoris found themselves while they were at the mercy of private Europeans—because under the existing laws the Maoris distinctly are at the mercy of Europeans, who can cause all sorts of trouble and annoyance, and breed disputes and discord, which end in the Maoris' lands passing from them. But if this Board is constituted, then many matters, some of which I shall enumerate—disabilities under which the Maoris now labour—will be removed. First of all the stamp duty, and then payment of private agents and Government agents for land-purchases, will be done away with, and lawyers will be done away with—that is to say, lawyers will no longer be allowed to charge fees—and interpreters will be got rid of, and the Europeans who make use of certain Maoris to induce old people and children to part with their interests will be done away with, and the land lying in idleness will be done away with, and then something can be done with it to enable it to bring in a return—because all these are the things which operate to reduce the value of leases of Maori land. The lawyers have to be paid, and interpreters have to be paid, and the Maoris going about inducing others to lease their interests have to be paid—all these things have to be paid. Therefore I say that if we appoint a Board all that will be done away with. There will no longer be any Maoris, interpreters, Maori agents, lawyers, or any agents to be paid, and the land will no longer lie in idleness and be unproductive. Now, supposing, under the existing laws and regulations, I have land of my own which I wish to lease, all these things have to be paid—interpreters, and so forth—which I have already described—and if the land is valued at 2s. an acre, 1s. per acre of that will be deducted to meet those expenses. Look at bush lands, for example: Supposing they are leased by Maoris to Europeans, they get about 2d. an acre, and if the bush is very good they may get as much as 6d. an acre for it; and I have no doubt that, if the Board had control of affairs, perhaps 1s. per acre would be obtainable for lands that are now leased for 6d., and the Maoris would be clear gainers to the extent of the 6d. they are now deprived of obtaining under existing conditions. And lands that Maoris now lease for, say, 5s. an acre, if the Board had control of affairs they would probably get 15s. an acre for them, because the people who wish to lease Maori lands would then see at once and for all that there was no other possible means whereby they could get these lands except through the medium of the Board, and they must approach the Board then; because, as things are now, when Maoris have the right to lease their own lands, if a pakeha comes and offers a certain rate to a certain Maori owner of the land, and the Maori owner will not accept it, and the pakeha is not willing to give more, he says, "Oh, very well; I will go and treat with Mr. So-and-so," and he goes and approaches some other owner with whom he thinks or has reason to believe that he can make a more advantageous bargain as far as he himself is concerned. But if the Board is given control of Maoris' leases, then Maori lands will be put upon the same footing as lands leased by Europeans to Europeans. That is why I so strongly endeavour to represent to the East Coast Maoris that it is necessary that they should adopt this view of the case, because Native lands all over New Zealand have been injured and prejudiced under the existing state of things, because the Maori does not know how to exercise the control of his own affairs and the control of land if it is given to him. The very fact of his having been given that power is one of the shown reasons why his land and property will pass away from him to somebody else. I am quite willing the Maoris should continue to have control of their own lands in all matters with regard to farming operations, stock, grazing, and so forth. There is no reason why the Board should deprive them of that right. Another thing I think ought to be done is this: Where lands are shut up and not worked by the Native owners, the Board should be given power to make a stipulation: that if those lands are not worked or some return got from them within a specified time, then the Board shall have the right to take over the control and administration of those lands and see that something is done with them. That would still be for the benefit of the Maori owners—that is, with regard to people who are too lazy to work their lands so as to derive any benefit or return from them. Another thing which is earnestly desired by the East Coast Maoris, and with regard to which I have presented petitions from them to the House, is that they should be afforded an opportunity to borrow money for the purpose of improving and working their lands—that they should be no longer bound down to dealing only with banks and other institutions from which they can borrow money nowadays, and where they have to pay large rates of interest. Now, I say that if we pass a law such as I have endeavoured to outline—embodying the main point which I consider necessary—I say that will be the condition under which we will be willing to hand over our lands to the control and administration of the