

Government; because the East Coast Maoris have realised and recognise now that they were wrong in their original contention during past years that they themselves were entirely competent to control and administer all matters in connection with their own lands. They have proved their own incompetency to do so, and they recognise that. The proof of that is that there is only from a million and a half to, say, two million, at the outside, acres of land remaining to the East Coast people now. I should say that there were, perhaps, about ten million acres originally belonging to the whole of the East Coast Maoris, and they probably have not got more than a million and a half acres remaining of their own property. It is entirely their own fault that they have allowed their land to slip away from them. Therefore I say that the East Coast people have definitely and decidedly instructed me to represent to the Government that their present wish is that their lands should be placed in the hands of the Government to look after and protect. The principal matter above all others which the East Coast Maoris wish first of all to see accomplished is an absolute stop put to all purchases of Native land for all time, and in such a manner that it will not be competent for any future Government to again reopen the system of purchase. If that is not done, then they say the Government has not got our welfare at heart, and has no desire to further our interests. Now, as to the Board—as to the suggestions that have been made about the Board—some people say, “Oh, the Board will deprive the Natives of their land and get rid of it for them.” The East Coast people are satisfied that they need have no fear as to how the Board will act, because as time goes on it will be quite competent to correct and amend any matters that may need amendment or correction with regard to the powers or application of the Board’s administration. Therefore I again say and urge, to the utmost of my power, upon the Committee that the first and foremost thing which the East Coast people desire is an absolute stop being put to all Native-land purchases. Well, it has been proposed that a new Bill should be framed and brought down. I say, let us establish the main principles in the Bill which was before us last year. I myself am absolutely satisfied as to the Premier’s honesty of purpose in this matter. I have no hesitation in saying that I do not believe he has the smallest desire to in any way humbug or get the better of the Maoris. Therefore I say that I am now willing the Government should frame a Bill to operate over the districts represented by myself and the two other Maori members of this Committee if it is done upon the lines which I have explained to the Committee. If Henare Kaihau still holds out that the Board to operate in his district should be composed entirely of Maori members, why not let him have what he asks for as far as his district is concerned? If it is proposed that that should be done, and that Maoris should be given the right and authority to control and administer their own affairs, well, let that be done in his district as far as he is concerned, and I will support it. Why should they not be given the absolute right to do that if they desire it—as an experiment? And if that experiment did not prove a success, then they could come under the operation of the Board eventually—as I say should be done. The reason why I say I do not think that Maoris will ever be able to manage their own affairs to any really good result is because they have got no method—they cannot make money, but they have to find it somehow. Well, if they think they have any means by which they can find the necessary money required to work out their idea, let them have the opportunity of proving it correct or otherwise. Of course, I may explain to the Committee that this is merely a sort of concessionary remark of my own. I have already told the Committee what the desire of the people whom I represent is—the purpose for which they have sent me here is to ask that the Board they advocate should be established in their district—should be made to apply to their district particularly, but the stopping of purchases of Native land should be made to apply to the whole Island. Then let the Maoris hunt about if they think there are any other views or ideas that they can suggest, and when they have decided upon them, and they try them, and they prove them, see if it is possible to combine and reconcile the two ideas. What is wrong about that?

1. *Mr. McLean.*] He has said his district. Where are the boundaries, from what point to what point?—The Eastern Maori Electoral District. I say, if the Government is desirous, and the House is desirous, of doing something for the benefit of the Maori people, let them pass this Bill with regard to the East Coast, and let the operation of the Board in that East Coast District show whether or not we are justified in claiming, as we do, that it will be for the benefit of the people it should be done, and let the other portions of the country, if they realise that it is a desirable law, then ask that their districts be brought under its operation; if, on the other hand, they think they can suggest something better, and they do so, and if it is satisfactorily shown to be better than what we now advocate, then it may be right, and legislate in that direction; but the wishes of the East Coast people, as expressed to me, and as they have directed me to express them to this House and this Committee, are that the Board Bill—the Premier’s Bill—be passed for their district. Well, now we have been told that it will be possible perhaps to frame a new Bill. Very well, I say, let the Government make whatever additions they think should be made. If it is the original Bill we are going to adopt, well, we have already got the additions drawn up, and if we are going to have a new Government Bill brought down I am also willing that that should be done—let the Government draw it up; but what I say is this, if the Government cannot frame the new measure they talk about, then, I say, pass the Board Bill. I have not the slightest fear of that Board Bill operating in any other direction than a beneficial one. Pass it so far as the East Coast is concerned. If the new Bill can be brought down shortly, pass it and let us have it, but I am perfectly certain that the passing of the Board Bill with regard to the East Coast should no longer be delayed. A man who is ill or indisposed cannot be expected to wait for an indefinite length of time before he is given his medicine, he wants it as soon as he can get it, but a man who is only suffering from merely a trifling complaint may be willing to put off the obtaining of medicine for its remedy—he can say, wait till this evening or some other day, without injuring himself seriously. Now, here is a matter I forgot to