

capital out of which to pay the fines. One of them said that he could make enough in a week to stand two or three convictions and still have a profit. Should a sly-grog case interfere with business for a week, the rest of the month you could make enough to pay your fines and make a handsome profit besides. In fact, the convictions were nothing less than good advertisements to those engaged in the sly-grog selling. Now the Natives themselves are doing something to try and keep liquor under some measure of control. In three of the settlements, I think, a rule exists to the effect that no liquor is to be brought into the settlement at large meetings; and meetinghouses are in some parts absolutely closed against people who are under the influence of liquor, and against drink generally. The *marae*—that is, the surroundings of a Maori settlement or meeting-ground—is absolutely tabooed against liquor. I want to refer to that question again later on in treating generally of the remedy for the existing state of affairs. After considering all the facts, and the expressed opinions of prominent men of the tribes, I sent in a report to my committee, in which I said,—

“I am compelled by the facts I have been able to elicit, and the strong and apparently spontaneous feeling of a large section of the Ngatimaniapotos, to report to your committee that a continuance of the present state of things in the King-country cannot be tolerated much longer; that the prohibition, though well meant, is a failure; and that the sale of liquor under proper control is desirable. I give the reasons briefly, and in order:—

“(1.) Sly-grog selling is carried on on an enormous scale in the boardinghouses, in the shanties, and in the settlements, by men, women, and boys.

“(2.) The chief incentive to this traffic is the large profit—say, 60 or 70 per cent.—made.

“(3.) The police are powerless to suppress it, because—

“(a.) It is very difficult to obtain convictions, from the generally unsatisfactory nature of the evidence:

“(b.) The law does not prohibit the importation of liquor into the King-country:

“(c.) The illicit traffic is carried on in so many different places at once that the police cannot possibly cover the country.

“(4.) That, since the provisions of the Licensing Acts do not apply, section 25 of ‘The Alcoholic Liquors Sale Control Act, 1895,’ does not protect Maori women, and the police can exercise no sort of control in that direction.

“(5.) That the Native chiefs who secured the prohibition sixteen years ago petitioned for its removal before they died, and the Ngatimaniapoto Tribe of to-day, among whom are prominent men of pronounced temperance views, ask for its removal.

“(6.) That since last summer nearly two hundred fresh settlers have come into the district, and, as the remaining Crown lands—a very large area—are thrown open, and the work of breaking in the new land proceeds, the white population must necessarily rapidly increase, rendering the efforts of the police increasingly difficult, if they are not useless now.

“I am compelled to recommend your committee to reconsider the first part of the resolution passed at the Papawai Conference, but to insist upon the second part, which urges the right of the Maori electors of prohibited districts to have a voice in deciding on the removal, and the right of Maori electors generally to decide on the question of licenses.”

Resuming his evidence, Mr. Ngata said: As to the question of the referendum, it must be remembered that, because prohibition has been placed in the King-country out of consideration for the Maori people there, they have a right to a voice in deciding on the removal of prohibition also. Take it any way you like, whether the referendum or local option, the Maoris are entitled to a voice in the matter, whatever the change. The only alternative that is proposed, so far as granting licenses for the King-country, is that which was suggested by Mr. Te Heuheu at the recent interview between Maori chiefs and the Premier. I favour his proposal myself because I have seen the present failure of the prohibition. I have seen Maori committees at work on the East Coast, in the Waikato under the Maori King, and in some parts also of the King-country. These Native committees are quite informally elected, and consist of the principal men who have most influence, whether they are chiefs or not. One of their rules in regard to the Maori meetinghouses has been incorporated in the Act of 1895, and is intended to prevent drinking in the meetinghouses. Another rule that is gaining ground in effect and favour is that no liquor is to be drunk or introduced into a Maori settlement at any meeting, of whatever nature. This rule is gradually gaining favour everywhere, and I will give you an instance of its having been carried out in the face of strong opposition. Last year I got the chiefs of the East Coast tribes to sign a paper agreeing to abide by this rule. All signed except one old gentleman. Last May he called a meeting to open a new meetinghouse, and in view of the occasion he got eight casks of beer. One of my uncles, who is head of the General Council of the Ngatiporou, heard of this, and at first he could think of no expedient for preventing the beer being drunk. When the meeting came on, however, my uncle found that he had some £90 which had been collected by two of the tribes towards the funds of the meeting. He thereupon told the old chap to make up his mind to have the beer sent back, failing which this money would be forfeited. The old chap very promptly got rid of three of the casks of beer somewhere, and sent the other five back. Now, the point which I wish to emphasize is that the Maoris themselves are able and willing to do something to keep down the drink evil, which is degrading them in the eyes of their women and children. The position is this: They say, “Here is the hotel; the law has seen fit to keep the hotel open, and God has seen fit to keep our throats open. Well, the best thing we can do is to take our throats to the hotel which has been legalised by the State, instead of bringing the stuff here to our *marae*.” I do not say that licenses would be the best alternative to meet the case in the King-country. It seems to me that any system that may be adopted that will tend to decrease the amount of drinking will meet with our favour. I cannot express any opinion as to whether we should have the Gothenburg system, or licenses, or any other system of controlling the liquor, as I do not know much about them. Well, Mr. Chairman, I cannot think of anything further to add.