

—I did not intimate that in so many words, but that was the gist of what I urged. I urged that it was the duty of the Government to put us in peaceful possession.

Mr. EDWARD PEARCE examined :

16. *Mr. Speaker.*] Can you give me any information as to what took place during the negotiations between the General and Provincial Governments?—I was not present at any one of those interviews. I merely heard what took place at second hand, so that my evidence can only go to the impression made on my mind at the time.

17. And what was that impression?—The impression made upon my mind at the time was similar to what has been spoken to by Mr. Brandon and Mr. Taylor; but I have no direct evidence to give on the point.

Mr. A. FOLLETT HALCOMBE examined :

18. *Mr. Speaker.*] You were the Provincial Secretary, were you not, when the negotiations took place between the General and Provincial Governments, with regard to Mr. McLean's mission?—Yes. I think it necessary to travel back to the time this negotiation was first entered into. It must be borne in mind that the surveys had been constantly interrupted for some months previously. Our whole survey staff, in that part of the country, had been placed under the control of the General Government, through Mr. Buller, who represented the General Government, and who acted without any reference whatever to the provincial authorities as to how the surveys should be carried out. It must also be remembered that some time previously, some survey pegs had been forcibly removed by Miritana, who was supposed to have been acting under directions of Mr. McDonald. Miritana and Mr. McDonald were both arrested and tried by the Court at Wanganui. The arrest of Miritana and Mr. McDonald was authorized, and the whole affair conducted, under directions of the Premier, Mr. Fox; and the Provincial Government had nothing to do with it. The arrest and punishment of these offenders seemed, for the time at least, to have the effect of allowing the surveys to go on quietly, until the occasion of the disturbance in the month (I think) of January, 1870. On the occasion of this last disturbance, the Provincial Government, as represented by myself and Mr. Taylor, placed ourselves in communication with the Premier, Mr. Fox, and urged that something should be done to overcome the Natives' opposition; and certainly, as far as my recollection goes, we expected and urged that a similar course should be adopted in this case to that which had been adopted in the case of Miritana. The Premier, after consulting with Mr. McLean, did not think it was wise to adopt forcible measures: at all events, we were asked to wait until Mr. McLean himself could see into the matter, and a promise was made that he should visit the district. Mr. McLean was at that time expected to arrive in Wellington soon, and we left the matter in that way. But month after month passed, and Mr. McLean did not come to Wellington. When he did at last arrive, it was within one month of the opening of the Assembly, and he was unable then to visit the Manawatu; nor did he visit it until the month of October or November of that year (1870). During the interval between our first application and the time Mr. McLean went up to the district, the opposition had grown to such an extent that there was no analogy between the position of matters when we first made our application, and their position when Mr. McLean visited the district. The adoption of forcible means, such as were taken in the case of Miritana, and which might have averted the opposition if they had been taken early in 1870, was hardly likely to do so in view of the more serious position into which it had grown in the meantime. During that interval, the members of the Government—specially Mr. Taylor and myself—were constantly applying to Mr. Fox, and Mr. McLean, while the latter was in Wellington; and we urged that Mr. McLean should not delay his promised visit to the district. We were in as complete an ignorance of the means Mr. McLean would adopt to settle the difficulty, as I believe Mr. McLean was himself: certainly I do not think any large gifts of land to the Natives were ever contemplated by any member of the Provincial Government. That Mr. McLean believed concessions might have to be made I believe, from the fact that on several occasions, when speaking privately to myself, he expressed his belief that the purchase made through Mr. Buller was not fully completed. In fact, I believe that he stated as his impression that Dr. Featherston, in making the purchase, had been misled. No one was more surprised than myself, when I heard by telegram from Mr. Fox of the reserves made by Mr. McLean.

19. You say that during the time that elapsed between the first representation made to the Government, and the visit made by Mr. McLean to the district, matters had grown more serious than they were when the interruption to the surveys first took place: had you, therefore, no reason to expect, yourself, that some concessions would have to be made before the province could be put in peaceable possession of the land?—I only say that I presumed Mr. McLean believed concessions would have to be made.

20. Am I to understand that your own opinion, at the end of 1870, was, that any forcible attempt made then to gain possession of the land would result in some conflict?—There could be no question about it. In talking the matter over with Mr. McLean, he stated distinctly that any such attempt would be injurious to the Government, and might have a very serious effect.

21. In your conversations with Mr. McLean, was anything said about claims arising as between the province and the colony out of this state of affairs?—That question was never mooted.