

looked over those grants personally he could not have put any question to me, and I do not think it likely that he or any Governor did so. As a matter of fact, I may say, I have seen a row of grants on the Governor's table awaiting the Governor's signature, all overlapping, so that the context was completely hidden, and the Governor has signed them in the spaces left for his signature. [Witness practically illustrated his meaning.] As a matter of fact, I have seen, perhaps, fifty grants on the table, and I think it very improbable that any Governor looked at them before he signed them, but that he signed them without looking to see what the grants were for.

188. Was it not the custom of the Governor to sign grants in the presence of his Ministers?—No; except in a few cases where the law stated that it would be lawful for the Governor in Council to reserve or grant certain lands.

189. Are not all grants required to be signed in Council?—No. I do not see if the grant in question was sent in the first place it may be inadvertently, that there had been no attention directed to the subject of the grant—I do not see how it is probable that it was signed in Council. The Colonial Secretary, I have stated, was the ordinary medium for forwarding grants to the Governor; but if there was any specific grant required to be signed in Council, it is possible that the Minister who required that specific grant might receive it from the Land Office, and present it for signature. I am speaking now of any special grant that required to be signed in Council. It is possible that the Minister who was in charge of the matter might lay it before the Governor in Council, although, as a rule, grants are always sent to the Colonial Secretary, or at least through his office, and not signed by the Governor in Council. It was not required, except in a few cases where the law states "It shall be lawful for the Governor in Council," and in such a case it would be signed in Council; but I am not aware when and how the grant in question was signed. If it was signed in Council, it is very possible—indeed, I may say, probable—that either the Minister presenting the grant for signature would briefly state what the grant was for, or, if he did not make such a statement, the Governor would ask him. As a general rule, it is the duty of the Minister in such a case to make an explanation voluntarily, without being asked—to say, "This grant requires to be signed under the authority of such an Act, and for such purposes." I can only say that I do not recollect that any such formality was used in respect to this grant, or that it was signed in Council at all.

190. If it had been sent in for signature in Council, would you not have been likely to have described its contents to the Governor? May there not have been half-a-dozen of the same kind?—It is quite possible there may have been twenty or thirty grants sent with it from the Crown Lands Office.

191. In that case there may have been half-a-dozen of the same kind?—It is not likely, because so few grants required to be signed in Council—the law does not require that they should be. As a matter of fact, I do not remember that some grants have been signed in Council when I was in office. I was some years in office. I have no reason to believe that this was one of those grants signed in Council. If it was signed, it is very likely that something was said about it; and if anything had been said about it, after the attention that had been bestowed upon this question, I do not think that I should have forgotten it.

192. If it should have been signed in that way, I can easily understand you might have told Sir George Grey it was not a grant referring to that particular reserve, the reason in your mind being that the instructions to Mr. Domett you have referred to—your attention not having been called to it—it does not seem improbable that in that case you might have said to Sir George Grey that the grant was not the one in question?—If I said so, it must have been in ignorance of the fact.

193. Sir George Grey, before signing, may have said to you, "This appears to be the grant referring to the Princes Street Reserve," and you may have answered him, "No, it is not that grant," the reason for saying so in your mind being the instruction which you had given to Mr. Domett?—Yes; the reason being that I myself was not aware that it was that grant. Not being so aware, I could not say that it was.

194. In fact, you might almost have been under the impression that it could not have been that grant, because you had received no intimation of the fact from Mr. Domett?—As this is a question of memory, I should like the records of the Crown Lands Office and the Colonial Secretary's Office to be examined, because every issue of a grant that comes up from the Crown Lands Office is recorded. The grants used—and I dare say it is customary still—to be accompanied by a minute to show that they had been examined and found correct, and were ready to be executed by the Governor. There is a record book kept of all grants that are signed; that is kept in the Crown Lands Office, and possibly in the Colonial Secretary's Office. I know it is kept in the Crown Lands Office also. If the records of the Crown Lands Office were searched, it would be seen whether Mr. Domett, or whoever was acting for the Secretary, had made any special reference to that grant. You cannot have a grant signed without its being recorded. It is duly numbered, and the day when it was signed entered in the record books. You can trace the day that that grant was signed by the record and by the number on the grant. You will find the day it was sent from the Crown Lands Office. You will find the minute that accompanied it, which will show whether any attention was called to it or not. You will find my minute upon it, and you will be able to find out whether it was signed in Council, or signed in the usual way, and sent up with a lot of others. You can trace the whole of it. There is no grant ever signed, in Council or not, which you cannot trace.

195. *Mr. Taiaroa.*] Are you aware, Mr. Stafford, at the time you were Minister, whether there were any rents accruing from the Princes Street Reserve paid into the Colonial Treasury before the day of the execution of the grant?—I cannot say whether or not any rents had been paid into the Colonial Treasury before the grant was executed, but I do know this, that during the time I was last in office rents were paid into the Colonial Treasury and specially reserved, because the question was in dispute as to who they should go to.

196. Supposing that there were rents paid and accrued on account of that land before the day of the issue of the grant, to whom do you think those rents should belong—to the Superintendent in whose favour the grant was made, or to the Natives?—I should think that would very much depend upon the nature of the terms that were agreed to as a compromise in regard to the reserve in question.