

*Mr. Williams.*

March 7, 1879.

397. There is just one point remaining. It has been stated—in fact, you said as much just now—that some of these claims were not in the handwriting of the person purporting to sign them. Can you give me any information upon that point? Can you lead me to any evidence, or point out claims that have been evidently signed by some person other than the one purporting to sign them?—Merely my own doubts, and from what has been told me by the Maoris.

398. Will you look at 26 and 27? Do you know those men?—I know Hone.

399. Are those two signatures in the same hand?—I should say they are very similar, but I do not know the handwriting. There is a great similarity between the two; and, as a rule, I should say that, unless it had been a Native who had been at school learning to write, he would sign his name very differently to that. They generally sign their names in an extraordinary manner—more like hieroglyphics than anything else—most of them.

400. Is the attesting signature in the same ink?—No, I should say not. There is a paleness about it. The attesting signature appears to be lighter in both cases.

401. Can you point out any claim to me that, from your knowledge of the signature of the claimant, is evidently not in his hand?—Yes—Wiri Ngapapa, Moihi Rahiri, and Taniora Rahiri. They are apparently all in the same handwriting, and with the same ink. Wiri Ngapapa's signature I know. I have had it in Court at times. He can write, and signs generally in a very small hand. This Moihi Rahiri cannot write at all, so far as my knowledge goes. As to Ngapapa, it is not the signature I have seen him write. He generally signs his name Wiri, without the Ngapapa.

402. Where is he?—In Whangaroa. The other signature I do not know. These three appear here to be in the same handwriting.

403. These three men reside at Whangaroa?—Yes.

404. Now, I will close your examination by giving you an opportunity of making any general statement you might wish to make on the subject.—I would remark with regard to my having made these numerous objections to these Native claims, that it has never been my wish to take a part in depriving or attempting to deprive the Natives of any rights they may be entitled to; I have always encouraged them. But I felt that I had a duty to perform. I was entrusted with the charge of the electoral roll. I had a duty to perform towards the Government, and I felt I had a duty to perform towards the electors of the district; and wherever I saw or felt there was a doubt in these names being brought forward I objected to them. I have already stated what action I took after Mr. Lawlor's ruling of the one case that was brought forward as a test. I looked upon Mr. Lawlor as my superior officer; that he sat here as judge, and that I was bound to follow his ruling when these objections were made in 1877. He ruled that they were all fatal, and struck them off. In these objections I took up the names of all parties. I can say this: that I feel that whatever charges have been brought against me of acting with partiality have been unjustly made. As long as I have held the office of Registration and Returning Officer, I have endeavoured to carry out my duties in an impartial manner, without any regard to parties; and I do not think myself that any man can establish a charge against me of having knowingly acted with partiality to either side, either in compiling the rolls for the district, or conducting the elections that have taken place in the district. I felt it my duty to take the steps I have taken, and at the present moment I feel no regret at the steps which I did take.

405. There is just one question which I find I have omitted to put; and that is, whether you received from any member of the Government any intimation of a desire that you should act differently in the way of making objections?—Certainly not.

406. I did not suppose you had; but I felt bound to put the question.—I might further state that you must be aware that the duties I had to undertake with regard to the electoral roll and the elections necessitated not only a great deal of time, but at times caused me a great deal of anxiety. The whole of this work was done gratuitously. I never received any remuneration; there was no salary attached to it. I might, if I had chosen, have spared myself by passing over these lists unnoticed. I felt, and feel now, that if I had done so I should not have been carrying out my duty.

*The Commissioner:* The Court will now be adjourned until 2 o'clock. I propose to take Captain Baker's evidence at that hour.

The Court adjourned accordingly.

The Court resumed at 2 p.m.

*The Commissioner:* Mr. Landon, I wish to say that, as you take a great interest in the matter you can have the report of yesterday's evidence to read as soon as the Court rises.

*Mr. Landon:* Thank you, Mr. Bryce. I do admit being largely interested.

Captain BAKER sworn and examined.

*Captain Baker.*

March 7, 1879.

407. What is your name?—George Baker.

408. You are harbourmaster at Russell?—Harbourmaster and pilot.

409. Do you hold any other official appointment?—No, sir; with the exception of this appointment since the 4th of June.

410. What other appointment do you hold?—Registration and Returning Officer.

411. When were you appointed?—I think on the 4th June, 1878. I received the following telegram:—"Government Buildings, 4.30 p.m., 4th June, 1878.—Captain Baker, Harbourmaster, Russell.—You are appointed Registration and Returning Officer for the Electoral District of Mongonui and Bay of Islands from this date. Please see Mr. Williams as to how to proceed. You will attend Revision Court to-morrow.—G. S. COOPER."

412. Is that the first intimation you received of the appointment?—That is the first.

413. And were you not consulted as to whether you would accept it or not?—Nothing further than that I received this telegram. Afterwards I sent the following:—"Russell, 8th June, 1878.—To Under Secretary, Colonial Secretary's Office, Wellington.—Have received revised electoral list from Revising Officer. Will clerk, R.M., afford me necessary clerical assistance and stationery in preparation roll for printer on above matter? Also, where roll to be printed, as time limited, and I am totally unacquainted with the duties?—GEORGE BAKER, Registration and Returning Officer, Mongonui and Bay of Islands."