

## MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

### PAYMENT OF PUBLIC MONEY TO MR. SIEVWRIGHT.

Mr. E. C. J. STEVENS, Chairman.

TUESDAY, 9TH DECEMBER, 1879.

Mr. JOHN SHEHAN, M.H.R., was examined.

1. *The Chairman.*] The Committee wished you to be good enough to attend for the purpose of giving some information upon this question, which has been referred to the Committee to decide upon with regard to the money which has been paid to Mr. Sievwright, as shewn by the correspondence.—  
What is the point in respect to which the Committee desire me to give evidence?

*Mr. J. Shehan.*  
9th. Dec. 1879.

2. You will find a requisition at the end of the documents. Will you state to the Committee the circumstances under which that was given?—Yes, certainly. The advance was made under the following circumstances:—On the arrival of the Native prisoners a good deal of discussion took place amongst the Native chiefs then present in Wellington. Several meetings were held, at which, I think, the Maori members of both Houses attended, and an endeavour was made by means of subscriptions amongst themselves to procure funds for the purpose of employing counsel. Hoani Nahe was a member of that Committee, and he brought the matter before myself in the first instance, and then, through me, before the Cabinet. This application was that provision should be made to procure legal assistance for the prisoners during the trials, and, after some discussion, it was agreed that an Imprest should be made to him of £300 (three hundred pounds), to be employed by him in procuring legal advice for the prisoners. These were all the circumstances of which I am aware. I believe he afterwards employed Mr. Sievwright, of Sievwright and Stout.

3. That is all, is it?—That is all.

4. In that requisition there are these words: "To be spent under the direction of the Hon. Hoani Nahe?—Yes.

5. That is yours, as well as this minute No. 2976?—Yes.

6. You say here, "*Re* Imprest of £300, authorised to be advanced to the Hon. Mr. Nahe, as contribution towards defence of Native prisoners. To meet the difficulties raised by the Audit Department you had better take the Imprest to yourself, paying the same in such manner and to such persons as the Hon. Mr. Nahe may direct." Will you please state how the difficulties have been raised? I understand you to say that the Cabinet determined to give an Imprest for the purpose of an advance for legal assistance to those Natives?—Yes.

7. When were the difficulties you mention there raised by the Audit Department?—They may possibly have been brought before me verbally by Mr. Lewis. It was not actually a legal difficulty, but the Audit Department pointed out the advisability of not Impresting to Ministers, in which I think they were quite right. I asked them to relieve me of two or three Goldfields accounts, which I had been working myself, and to get through that difficulty I suggested that Mr. Lewis should take the money, and pay it under the direction of Mr. Nahe.

8. You will observe that in Dr. Buller's statement, he says that Mr. Hoani Nahe was not a member of the Committee of chiefs; did you notice that?—Yes.

9. He distinctly says that at one time Hoani Nahe proposed to become a member of the Committee, but, having regard to his official position, he afterwards withdrew his name, and declined to take any part in the movement?—That may be; I could not say it was not so, but he certainly was a member of the Committee in the first instance, because I saw his name amongst the other Native chiefs, and he came to me on the matter. I can only say I had not anything to do with the matter. It was done by my colleague, the Hon. Hoani Nahe, and if he had not been on the Committee it would have been the same.

10. *Mr. McLean.*] Was there any understanding about employing Mr. Rees in this case?—With me?

11. Yes?—None.

11A. Or with Sir George Grey?—I could not say. Hoani Nahe mentioned to me his intention to employ Mr. Rees, and he proposed that the money should be paid to Mr. Rees directly, which I refused, and that is the reason that I directed on the requisition that the money should be paid to Mr. Nahe himself.

12. Did you know of this refusal on the part of the Natives to accept any advice from the Government when you made this payment?—No, I knew the Natives declined to have any lawyers at all, and refused to accept any advice.

13. Then how did you come to pay this £300 when they refused to accept advice?—Because when