

Mr. T. W. Lewis,
9th Dec. 1879.

required to give information, I have obtained from the Legislative Council a précis of the papers I produced before the Committee of the Council. I have looked over the paper, and it seems to me to give an exact précis of the history of the case. I would suggest that as this paper includes the extracts I have already read, that I should now read the whole of it, and it might be incorporated in the report.

The following is an accurate statement of the case so far as I know it:—

“On the 1st August a requisition was sent in by the Native Department in the following terms; ‘Required the sum of £300, as an advance for payment of legal expenses in connection with West Coast Natives. To be spent under the direction of the Hon. Mr. Nahe. To be charged to Advances Consolidated Fund.—J. SHEEHAN.’

“The Audit objected to the advance being made; but what the precise nature of their objection was does not appear on these papers.

“On the same day the Native Minister gave the following order to the Under Secretary: ‘Mr. Lewis; *Re* imprest of £300, authorized 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. Please attend to the thing at once.—JOHN SHEEHAN. 1st August, 1879.’

“Whereupon the Under Secretary minuted as follows: ‘File with my requisition. It has since been arranged that the money had better be paid to Mr. Sievwright direct, so that he may be held responsible to furnish detailed accounts when required by the Audit Department. Native Minister has approved.—T. W. LEWIS. 1st August, 1879.’

“The £300 was thereupon paid to Mr. Sievwright by the Treasury Cashier, in the following way: A voucher was prepared showing the Native Department to be ‘Dr. to Basil Sievwright: This money is wanted as part costs of legal advice to and for the Ngatiawa and Taranaki Natives, in regard to their lands on the West Coast. Approved: For immediate payment. J. S. 1st July [Aug.], 1879.’ ‘The Paymaster-General: Please direct the immediate payment of this amount to Mr. Sievwright.—T. W. LEWIS. 1st August, 1879.’ ‘The Cashier; Please pay.—J. C. G. 1st August, 1879.’

“An Imprest Account was afterwards sent in, minuted thus: ‘Account of W. T. Thane, 6th August, 1879. Mr. Lewis: Be good enough to direct how this expenditure of £300 is to be charged.—J. MORETH. 6th Oct., 1879.’ Upon which the Under Secretary minuted: ‘Hon. Native Minister: For your instructions. This payment should, I think, be dealt with in the same manner as the amounts paid on account of Native prisoners, papers relating to which are before you for consideration. T. W. LEWIS. 9th Oct., 1879.’

“The Native Minister thereupon minuted that he would bring the matter before the Cabinet.

“On the 10th October the Native Minister (Mr. Bryce) directed the Under Secretary to procure the detailed accounts referred to in the preceding minute, and to ascertain the actual services for which the £300 had been paid. A letter was accordingly written to Mr. Sievwright on the 10th October, calling upon him to furnish as soon as possible an account in detail of the expenditure of the £300, and of the actual services for which the payment had been made.

“Next day (11th October) Mr. Sievwright replied that he was employed by and received his instructions from Mr. Nahe, and was not employed or instructed by the Government, and he therefore referred the Native Department to Mr. Nahe, who had procured the sum in question towards costs which he was incurring in connection with Native claims; that the money was only received by himself (Mr. Sievwright) as Mr. Nahe’s agent; but that if Mr. Nahe desired it, he (Mr. Sievwright) would supply all the information he possessed. Mr. Sievwright added that the business towards the costs of which the sum was granted had only begun, and would probably be both laborious and expensive.

“On the 13th October the Native Minister directed a telegram to be sent to Mr. Nahe for the particulars of the services rendered; and also directed Mr. Sievwright to be reminded that the money did not appear from the vouchers to have been paid to him as solicitor for a private person, but as the person who was himself to render the service.

“Mr. Nahe replied to that telegram, on the 16th October, as follows: ‘The services performed by Sievwright and Rees were, to make arrangements respecting the reserves consented to by the Government for the Maoris at Taranaki, who are now in prison; and when a Commission is appointed to enquire into the troubles at Taranaki, Mr. Rees and others will act as lawyers for me at Taranaki: for I represented Taranaki, and that is why I asked the Government to show me consideration, and give me money to retain the services of a lawyer for my people at Taranaki.—HOANI NAHE.’

“Mr. Sievwright replied to the Native Department’s letter on the 18th October, referring the Native Minister to his employer, and repeating that he himself had never directly or indirectly applied to the Government for money in connection with the West Coast Native business; had never, in fact, known of an application having been made until he was asked to draw the money; and never had been asked or employed by the Government to advise the Natives, or to obtain advice and legal assistance for them. He therefore declined to supply any information in his possession, unless instructed by Mr. Nahe to furnish it.

“Upon this, the Under Secretary recommended that, as the Controller had power under the Revenues Act to demand whatever information was necessary to elucidate any public account, it might be advisable to leave the matter to be dealt with by that officer.

“The Native Minister, on the 2nd November, referred the matter to the Controller for investigation, requesting him to obtain from Mr. Sievwright the particulars of the service rendered, which he had himself failed in obtaining.

“On the 3rd November the Controller sends the following minute to Mr. Sievwright: ‘The Controller finds that a sum of £300 was paid by the Treasury to Mr. Sievwright on the 2nd August, as part costs for legal advice to the Natives as to their land on the West Coast. Mr. Sievwright is requested to send to the Audit Office the account of the expenditure of these moneys.—J. E. FITZGERALD. 3rd November, 1879.’