

106. Had you any statement from any of the Native owners themselves as to their being represented by counsel—at the first or second meetings?—No, except that a number of them were present at the first meeting and Mr. Skerrett was their legal adviser.

107. The legal adviser of some of those who were present?—Some or all.

108. Do you not think it should have been your duty to satisfy yourself, as President of the Board, that the Natives were properly represented by counsel at these meetings, seeing that the other side were represented by counsel?—It is not usual for counsel to be present at meetings of assembled owners. There is an inclination to mix these meetings up with meetings of the Native Land Board. These were simply deliberative meetings of owners, which I attended as the representative of the Board.

109. And at which you presided?—At which I was chairman, duly elected by the owners present. I did not preside owing to my official capacity.

110. But you were appointed chairman on account of your holding the position of President of the Board?—No, they happened to elect me chairman—they could have elected anybody else.

111. Still, it was your duty to be present at the meeting as President of the Board?—That is so

112. You raised no objection to Mr. Lewis, who was evidently very anxious to purchase these blocks, being represented by his counsel at all the meetings?—No objection at all.

113. There was no counsel present representing the Natives at the second meeting?—No.

114. And no decision was arrived at by the owners?—No. They were unanimous in wishing for a further adjournment.

115. The Natives who were present?—Yes.

116. Apparently they were not anxious to sell?—I do not know that they were not. They wanted further time to consider the matter.

117. What arrangement was made about the third meeting?—I was asked to adjourn the second meeting to the 22nd March.

118. By whom were you requested to adjourn the meeting?—By Eketone for one party, and Tuiti Macdonald for the other. The matter was put to the vote, and carried unanimously.

119. How did you inform the other Native owners of the intended date for the adjourned meeting?—It was not my duty to inform them. We had a large number of owners present, and these and the agents concerned were aware of it. Mind you, we had thirty or forty present there out of the 108. There might have been another twenty they could get into touch with. These things get about pretty well. You cannot get into touch with Natives all over the country.

120. You know, of course, that some of these Native owners lived at Te Kuiti, some at Mokau, some at Otaki, and some in other parts of New Zealand?—That is so.

121. There were no circulars sent out for the adjourned meetings?—Yes, for the second meeting there were; for the third there were not. The third meeting was simply an adjournment for twelve days.

122. The Native owners were not notified by circular of the intention to hold a third meeting on the 22nd March?—They were all there at the second meeting.

123. You told us that there were between thirty and forty present out of 108?—I suppose a good many of the others would be children and old people who could not come. The thing was pretty well known.

124. Do you not think that is a particularly loose way of doing things?—No.

125. Do you think Europeans would permit their business to be managed in that way?—Could you have done any better?

126. I am not under examination; but if I were President of a Maori Land Board I would make it my duty to see that a circular was sent to each Native owner in a case where such important business was intended to be dealt with?—I do not know how you would find them.

127. Now, tell us about the third meeting?—The third meeting was fixed for the 22nd March. I was not present.

128. Were you represented?—Yes. Judge Holland acted as my deputy. I was unable to be present.

129. Have you got the minutes of the third meeting?—Yes.

130. Will you put them in?—Yes.

131. It may be necessary for me to call Judge Holland, Mr. Chairman. I presume there will be no objection. (To witness): Did you, as President of the Maori Land Board, satisfy yourself, before this alienation was permitted, that each Native had sufficient land left to live on?—Yes.

132. You were quite satisfied that each of these 108 owners had sufficient land left to maintain themselves and live upon?—Yes.

133. Do you know anything about an arrangement by which £2,500 was to be collected from these Native owners?—Yes.

134. Will you tell us what you know about it?—I attended at Te Kuiti on the 1st June last to pay out the Mokau moneys. A large number of the owners were present. I waited the whole of the day, but none of them came round for their money. The next day I was going away by the train—I had actually my luggage on the train. I may say that I had heard rumours that they were not a happy family in regard to legal expenses and agents' costs. They came over to the train as I was leaving—I had another fixture at Naruawahia on the 2nd—and said that everything had been fixed up, and they were now prepared to take their money.

135. "They"?—The Native owners who were present.

136. Were there many of them?—There would be between forty and fifty—a large number, at any rate. I went back to the hall, and then they told me an arrangement had been arrived